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# TOR

JOURNAL OF THE SOUTH WEST DOCTORAL TRAINING CENTRE

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- an open access journal led by students, for students at the South West Doctoral Training Centre (SWDTC) comprising the University of Bath, the University of Bristol and the University of Exeter. The journal supports students looking to publish their work, provides editorial experience to students who help run the journal, and establishes a cross-institutional network for peer review training and professional development.

This journal began its journey to publication in 2014. As volunteer editors we hoped that an open access journal could provide fellow students a valuable resource for those critical academic activities, publishing and peer reviewing. We agreed that a student led journal could offer a supportive, collegiate framework for students new to the process of publication and peer review. Since then, and with the support of the SWDTC, we are excited to have overseen the production of this, the first issue of the journal.

As an editorial board we would like to extend our thanks to Sonja Ho, Molly Conisbee and Joanna Williams as well as the academic staff at the SWDTC for supporting our endeavour. We would like to thank our colleagues who attended peer review training and submitted articles for publication, and to Susan Milner, Rajiv Sarin, Susan Kelly and Sue Timmis for leading p

peer review workshops over the course of the year. We would also like to thank Mairi McLellan for her contribution to the design of the journal. Finally, we hope you will enjoy this first issue of the journal, and we all look forward to future editions and to watching the journal grow under students, present and future, at the SWDTC.

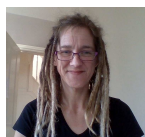
With our best wishes,

Benjamin Bowman, Katherine Evans, Harry Pitts, Ioannis Costas and Gwilym Owen,

Editors

Tor: The Open Review for the Social Sciences, SWDTC

# 'Child trafficking' moral panic: blame, disrepute and loss



**Alinka Gearon**

*My background is in UK child protection social work practice in the statutory sector and working as an independent social work consultant. I am currently finishing my PhD at the University of Bath, exploring the experiences of young people who have been trafficked. My research interests lie in qualitative and child-focused research exploring children's worlds, child protection and children's rights. I am exploring how research which engages children directly can be integrated into social work education, social policy and practice. My PhD research methods have incorporated dynamic group work, arts-based methods, music and dance, to engage young people to express their voice.*

## Abstract

'Child trafficking' has recently been critically positioned within moral panic theory by authors such as Westwood (2010) and Cree et al. (2014) making links between historical and present day presentations of this social issue. This paper contributes to this discussion but is distinct in its central concern; how separated and moving children and young people experience the present UK 'child trafficking' framework, in the midst of moral panic. Moral panics create conditions of blame, disrepute and loss, which this paper explores in relation to 'child trafficking' policy and practice and considers the implications for trafficked children. (Non-)contemporary concepts of childhood underpinning the 'child trafficking' framework are examined, which posit children and childhood dichotomously as either innocent and lost, passive to abuse and wholly dependent on adult protection or as complicit, undeserving threats. In 'child trafficking' policy and practice, these constructs variably punish or 'protect' children, failing to address this group of children's needs.

In the current climate of moral panics about social phenomena that seemingly threaten our social fabric and moral order (Critchler, 2009) through 'enacted melodramas' (Wright, 2015), social work research needs to critically engage with 'claims-makers' (Clapton et al., 2013) and present alternative renderings of social problems. This paper argues that social work research is well placed to redress moral panics through its activity in engaging ethically with people who are marginalised with difficult social problems, without a voice, as the subjects of moral panics.

**Keywords:** Child trafficking, moral panic, children, childhood.

## Introduction

The interest in 'child trafficking' has grown globally since the first international convention to define trafficking in persons was established by the United

Nations (UN) in 2000 in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. In a highly emotive and morally entrepreneurial fashion, member states were called into action as trafficking was presented as

"One of the most egregious violations of human rights that the United Nations now confronts. It is widespread and growing...The fate of these most vulnerable people in our world is an affront to human dignity and a challenge to every State, every people and every community" (Kofi Annan, UN, 2004, p. iv).

Since the ratification of the protocol in the UK in 2006, 'child trafficking' has increasingly been exposed as a growing phenomenon, requiring a legal, policy, and practice response to the third most lucrative illicit trans-national industry (Haken, 2011) estimated at \$32 billion (ILO, 2005). 'Child trafficking' is a complex social issue with crosscutting policy contexts of economic and social policy, child protection, migration, human rights, internal security and crime-prevention (Craig et al., 2007; Glind & Kooijmans, 2008).

This paper asserts that the growing attention to 'child trafficking' and policy responses display many features of moral panics as defined by Cohen (1972) and developed further in its relevance to modern society by authors such as Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2009) and Tyler (2013). A key facet of moral panics is the hasty judgements of its subjects, as to who is moral and therefore 'deserving' or immoral and 'underserving'. Such 'oppositional categorising' (Fook, 2013) creates a form of 'othering', by invoking judgements on who is to blame or praise, who gains or loses, who seeks fame or is held in disrepute? (Bodhi, 2005). This paper explores the conditions of blame, disrepute and loss in relation to 'child trafficking' policy and practice, examines the underlying constructs of childhood underpinning these conditions and considers the implications for this group of children.

This paper, which critically analyses the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework, draws upon my PhD research which explores young people's experiences of 'child trafficking'. Currently, no peer-reviewed empirical studies in the UK give voice to trafficked children. My research aims to address this gap in the literature. The subjects of 'child trafficking' as well as separated and moving children are the focus of this paper, specifically in how they experience the UK 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework.

## Modern Slavery

The present attention and interest in 'child trafficking' displays many features of a moral panic, which Cohen (1972) in his seminal work defined as

"A threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people" (p. 9).

Current media amplification of 'modern slavery' and rescue stories echo 19th century social purity campaigns to end the 'white slave trade' (Westwood, 2010; Cree et al., 2014). The immorality of 'child trafficking' is often sensationalised by foregrounding sex trafficking in campaigning activities (O'Connell Davidson, 2011) and moral outrage is amplified through extensive media coverage of 'child sex gangs', as in the recent investigations in Telford, Rochdale and Oxford. Moral entrepreneurs (Cohen, 1972) or the 'claims-makers' (Clapton et al., 2013) fuelling moral panics estimate the enormous scale of trafficking; 'tips of icebergs' are often quoted by 'anti'-trafficking agencies; and both government and NGO's are keen to convey that figures of known trafficking cases are likely to be far higher (UNICEF, 2007; SOCA, 2012; IDMG, 2012; ATMG, 2012).

Trafficking press releases attract the public's awareness, the media, and consequently funding for various programmes. As O'Connell Davidson and Anderson (2006) critically observe, 'trafficking' has become 'big business' for middle class professionals, including researchers, politicians and lobbyists. The present 'modern slavery' moral panic appears to be driven by middle strata interest groups (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009), appropriating the issue for its own purposes. But who are the emerging 'folk devils' (Cohen, 1972) or 'revolting subjects' (Tyler, 2013) in the 'child trafficking' moral panic? Beyond the obvious abhorrent actions of "extreme depravity" (BBC, 2013) of traffickers in abusing children, this paper considers through the themes of blame, disrepute and loss that the subjects, children and young people who cross social and physical borders, are cast as a threat to the moral order and scapegoated as "national abjects" (Tyler, 2013, p. 9).

## Blame

The UK 'child trafficking' framework has two main approaches in policy and practice. The welfare approach aims to protect children referred to or defined as 'trafficked' and the criminal justice approach focuses on

immigration and criminal processes. In the UK, the predominant model adopted is the criminal justice approach due to policy-makers interpreting trafficking through criminal, immigration, and economic discourses. The Home Office has lead responsibility for 'anti-trafficking' policy; the UK Human Trafficking Centre is situated under the National Crime Agency (whose main concern is organised immigration crime), and the UK Border Agency is the main agency dealing with referrals of 'trafficking victims'. These immigration agencies make decisions if individuals referred to them are a 'victim of trafficking' and accord them a formal label, presenting a clear conflict of interests.

The criminal justice approach to trafficking with the rhetoric of prosecution to 'combat' the crime of trafficking is questionable given the extremely low numbers of traffickers actually prosecuted. Only 8 convictions were secured in England and Wales for 2011 "on a principal offence basis" (IDMG, 2012, p. 4). The structure and orientation of 'child trafficking' policy from a criminal and immigration lens has been problematized, objections have been raised about the Home Office not being the appropriate body to address the issue of children's rights to protection who have been trafficked (ATMG, 2010; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013). The construction of the UK 'child trafficking' framework within 'illegal migration' discourse can be seen as serving a justification by the state to control increasing migration with tightening of border controls rather than addressing the protection and needs of people who have been trafficked.

The welfare approach in the UK 'child trafficking' framework focuses on protecting 'victims of trafficking' within the existing system of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. However, social workers working with potential child victims of trafficking are required to work closely with various agencies under a criminal justice approach where greater emphasis is placed on prosecution and punishment of associated crimes within 'child trafficking'. Social workers have additional roles to their statutory duties under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, including referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)<sup>1</sup>, age assessments and assisting children with their immigration claims. The expectations of social workers to work closely with Home Office agencies raises the issue of complicity of social work practice with immigration policy (Humphries, 2004) and presents tensions in practice between the duty to provide protection and the requirements of prosecution of crimes against the state, such as illegal immigration (Wade et al., 2005).

The outcomes for children and young people are that very few are formally accepted as having been trafficked

<sup>1</sup> The ascension of the Modern Slavery Bill now includes a new statutory duty to refer to the NRM, despite objections being raised by various child agencies about its function not serving the child's best interests (for example Office of the Children's Commissioner's response to the Modern Slavery Bill Evidence Review, 2013).



through the criminal justice model. At a national level 372 children and young people were referred to the NRM in 2012 (UKHTC, 2012), but only 31% of children's cases referred to NRM to date have been accepted and defined as formally 'trafficked' (ATMG, 2014), despite referring practitioners suspecting trafficking has taken place. Statistically, therefore, children suspected of having been trafficked are more likely to be treated punitively through an approach which places greater emphasis on immigration matters over child protection concerns. The focus on crimes against the state over and above the potential crimes committed against children can lead to a lack of protection and denial to access services to prevent trafficking.

The concern for this group of children and young people is that the present construction of the UK 'child trafficking' framework invokes in practice a dichotomous approach of passive, deserving 'victim of trafficking' or a complicit, undeserving threat. Trafficked persons are constructed as involuntary 'victims' who have been coerced in some way and smuggled migrants are constructed as voluntarily 'consenting' to their migration. In practice, if a child is identified as having been trafficked (and statistically very few are), they are accorded special 'victim' status and can access specialist support and protection. A smuggled child migrant, in practice termed an 'unaccompanied asylum seeker,' is likely to be seen as complicit and assigned responsibility for their situation. 'Consenting' children are thus attributed blame for their circumstance and this moral stance determines a child's legal category, asylum status, a lack of potential protection required in exploitative situations and subsequent access to specialist support. Children who are migrating alone, separated from their carers, are processed through the criminal justice model. They are fingerprinted, forensically interviewed and detained by immigration officials (11 Million, 2008), as criminals in "violation of state sovereignty" (UKBA, 2013, p.7) they are treated punitively through detention, imprisonment or deportation. When 'smuggled illegals' are treated as "culpable and complicit actors" (Bhabha & Zard, 2006, p. 6) both trafficking situations and addressing the abuse children experience may be overlooked.

The demarcation of coercion and consent, as a key determinant between 'trafficking' and 'smuggling' highlights an oversimplified and false division within children's complex migration experiences. Attributing choice and complicity to 'smuggled' children in the decisions to migrate can be contested. A common theme emerging in research with separated children is that young people have a lack of choice or awareness when they were sent abroad, they are not given a choice about whether to leave their families, and many do not know where they are going (Wirtz, 2009; Crawley, 2010a). 'Consent' is attributed to children as a punitive approach to being complicit in illegal immigration and yet the notion of consent may not be a reliable indicator of the child's circumstances. Consent and coercion can overlap, as can smuggling and trafficking experiences, so the axis of involuntary-victim and voluntary-threat is an oversimplified and false dichotomy.

## Disrepute

Failings of the welfare approach in protecting children from exploitation have been highlighted in the 'child sex grooming gangs' in Rochdale, Telford, Derby and Oxford (BBC, 2012). Alexi Jay's (2014) independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation was significant in making explicit links between the organised sexual exploitation of children and 'child trafficking' in the UK. Jay's (2014) inquiry highlighted how the welfare approach failed to protect children who were treated with contempt across agencies, by the police, lawyers and social workers, in some cases exploitation continuing for many years. The Rochdale trafficking cases highlighted welfare practitioners inappropriately attributing 'consent' to a 'lifestyle choice':

"social work practitioners and managers wholly overestimated the extent to which Suzie could legally or psychologically consent to the sexual violence being perpetrated against her" (Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children's Board, 2012, p. 19).

In Operation Retriever in Derby, victims of sexual exploitation were treated as 'rebellious adolescents' (Derby Safeguarding Children Board, 2010). Attributing consent to young people in exploitative situations is problematic in practice in both the welfare and the criminal justice approaches within the UK 'child trafficking' framework.

Children's own accounts of what is happening to them are held in disrepute, there is a 'culture of disbelief' cast upon children's migration accounts (Children's Society, 2012) with an over-focus by immigration staff in assessing the 'credibility' and consistency of children's claims (Crawley, 2010b). The Office of the Children's Commissioner's enquiry into sexual exploitation by gangs If only someone had listened (Berelowitz et al., 2013) highlights the plight of young people not being helped, listened to or taking actions necessary to meet their needs. This can result in children experiencing trafficking being re-victimised by state policy and state actors through punitive treatment or inaction leading to further exploitation. In the recent trial of seven traffickers in Oxford, one of the several victims giving testimony stated,

"Stop blaming the girls, that's the easy thing to do. It's harder to accept what's going on and do something about it" (Meachin, 2013, p. 31).

## Loss

In the 'child trafficking' framework, the process of being recognized as a 'victim' is central in accessing support and assistance. 'Child trafficking' campaigning materials and the media often draw our attention to the plight of 'trafficked children' as defenceless, innocent, weak and biddable, abused by adult authority and force. The child protection response to trafficked 'victims' recognises trafficking as child abuse. Child abuse, however, is often presented as a 'violation of childhood' or 'lost childhood', which reinforces an assertion of what childhood should be, as a time of innocence, "an asexual and peaceful

existence within the protective bosom of the family” (Kitzinger, 2004, p.166). The concept of childhood innocence in the construction of child abuse can stigmatise the ‘knowing child’, as the romanticization of childhood “excludes those who do not conform to the ideal” (Kitzinger, 2004, p. 168). Both victimhood and child abuse narratives draw upon the romanticized child concept of innocence coupled with children viewed as innately passive, thus requiring adult protection.

The child protection response to ‘child trafficking’ can be contested as capable of dealing with the complexities of separated children’s experiences. The focus on the vulnerability and passivity of children within protectionist discourses reinforces the perception of children’s naivety and dependency (Westwood, 2010). Kitzinger (2004) rightly observes a lack of addressing resilience and vulnerability, successful coping strategies and resistance to abuse. The concept of innocence also denies children access to knowledge and power, in turn actually increasing their vulnerability to abuse (Kitzinger, 2004). Young people can experience protectionism within ‘child trafficking’ support services as infantilising (Mai, 2011) and socially excluding where they are subjected to increased surveillance under the guise of protection. The most commonly identified ages of children defined as ‘trafficked’ to the UK are 16 and 17 (Bokhari, 2008) but within the current framework these young people are assumed to be “asexual and apolitical beings” (Crawley, 2011, p. 1171) with no agency. Adolescent separated and moving young people therefore, appear to be approached in policy and practice through a conceptual understanding of childhood that excludes adolescence.

## Discussion

The discourse of risk in ‘child trafficking’ has been shaped historically by moral panic as highlighted in the 19th century purity campaigns in defence of innocence and girls’ virginity (Westwood, 2010) and continues today, with child protection’s (and social work’s) preoccupation with risk, measured against normalised standards of behaviour (Parton, 1998). Deviation from these norms poses problems for this group of children, particularly older children’s agency being misrepresented and instead being labelled and blamed as ‘deviant’ and ‘immoral’. Separated young people who move across physical and social borders can find themselves as ‘not fitting’ into social, cultural, legal, political, and moral norms and categories within the present construction of ‘child trafficking’. As Cohen (1972) observes, transcending norms can be viewed as a threat to societal values and interests, invoking an approach that seeks to increase regulation and control, or to punish those that threaten the moral order. ‘Child trafficking’ discourses underpinned by concepts of passive victimhood, culturally patterned norms of the industrialised North, and children perceived as biddable and therefore needing to be measured and controlled against risks, shape ‘anti-trafficking’ policy and influence practice. This constructs a framework that can punish or ‘protect’ this group of children, through a relationship with state actors typified by

marginalisation, paternalism, protection(ism) and institutionalisation (Qvortup, 1994).

Vulnerable groups emerging as ‘folk devils’ threatening societal values are “social types” that serve as “visible reminders of what we should not be” (Cohen 1972, p.10). Hayle (2013) argues that the concept of Cohen’s ‘folk devils’ often becomes conflated with ‘deviants’, ‘risk subjects’ and the socially marginalized. Hayle (2013) posits that only a portion of these ‘deviants’ will go on to being labelled as “evil” (p.1131). The predominant criminal justice approach in the UK ‘child trafficking’ framework can treat children punitively through criminalising ‘victims’. Accounts of separated and moving children being imprisoned, rather than being afforded protection as ‘victims in exploitative situations’, were actively debated in the House of Lords in 2010 (Butler-Sloss, 2010). Romanian children have been convicted and sentenced to prison who had been forced by a violent gang into a brothel, children caught offending as part of pick-pocketing gangs have been prosecuted, Vietnamese children have been imprisoned for cannabis cultivation in cannabis factories and children detained for holding false identity documents, are all examples of ‘victims’ of trafficking being criminalised (CEOP, 2009; Butler-Sloss, 2010; ATMG, 2010). The criminalization of separated and moving children and young people is underpinned by objectification of the child’s ‘criminal’ behaviour into further re-victimisation by the state. In terms of the conceptual rendering of childhood underpinning this punitive treatment, one can link it to Puritanical perceptions of children as innately evil requiring discipline and punishment (James et al., 1998).

‘Popular punitivism’ is viewed by Monterosso (2009) as a vehicle that allows the criminalization of the ‘other’, scapegoating welfare recipients, immigrants and other vulnerable targets (p. 17) and can be related to Cohen’s (1972) concept of ‘folk devils’ in moral panic. Popular punitivism and the ‘criminalization of social policy’ (Rodger, 2008) explicitly link key social policy agendas with those of criminal justice, such as family, educational, and youth policy (p. 19). This is also reflected in ‘child trafficking’, refugee studies (Morrison, 2001) and in debates about children involved in prostitution (Crowley & Patel, 1996):

“The transgression of the idealised construction of what adults want to believe is ‘childhood’, has serious consequences for young people. Benevolence is translated (via the need to ‘protect’ children) into punishment” (p. 125).

As Muncie (2009) notes, in criminology and the associated linkages to social policy areas, children and young people remain an absent ‘victim’ voice. However, there is a general paucity of research with separated and moving children and young people, and even less empirical work addressing children’s agency within this group. There remains a distinct gap in understanding or representing the subjective experiences of children and young people who have experienced trafficking. A more nuanced understanding is needed of children and young

people who move across not only geographical borders, but also who move across adult-defined social borders and cross morally defined social norms. What is absent is knowledge about the context of children's social movement, changing social roles, and the social mobility of children through their lived experiences.

## Conclusion

Blame, disrepute and loss have been considered as moral conditions featuring in the construction of the UK 'child trafficking' framework. These conditions have been explored as manifestations of morality/immorality in the policy and practice framework that serve to increase moral regulation and control. Moral panic, anxiety and fear can further victimise and criminalise marginalised groups, especially those without voice who become defined as a threat to societal values, leading to reactionary and harmful policy and practice responses.

The moral role of social work and research is considered to be well placed to challenge the anxiety and fear stirred up by moral panics. Social work research is underpinned by values towards social justice, but is also simultaneously politically engaged and offers a means of bringing to light "subjected knowledges" (Humphries, 2005, p.284). The subjects of moral panics are not named as the claims-makers, the moral entrepreneurs or the moral crusaders; their voice is largely absent, especially children and young people. Since the establishment of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) listening to the voices of children has become a "powerful and pervasive mantra for activists and policy makers world-wide" (James, 2007, cited by Goździak, 2008) however, many social science researchers have omitted children as active participants informing knowledge and theory. This is particularly evident in 'child trafficking' research. Children's experiences are notably not represented, an issue my PhD research aims to address. My research with young people explores their lived experiences as children, of separation, of being on the move and 'child trafficking'. Focusing on listening to and hearing how children and young people experience their situation, young people voice how they have encountered the 'child trafficking' policy and practice framework. Social research that accepts children and young people as competent social actors in their own right accepts that their voices are reflective of their selves. This provides not only a space but also a vehicle to represent alternative renderings of social issues.

Social work research is well placed to redress moral panics through its activity in not only engaging ethically with those marginalised with difficult social problems, but also to challenge the assumptions underpinning our understanding of children, young people, childhood, and adolescence. Hasty moral judgements can lead to naming and labelling subjects of moral panics all too easily as victims/threats or heroes/folk devils. However, ethical discernment in social work research allows for the discrimination of the conditions of moral panics. Within moral panic the dichotomous conditions of praise/blame, fame/disrepute, gain/loss can be exposed

and challenged, offering a more nuanced and balanced understanding of social problems.

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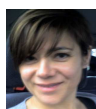
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# Placebo analgesia: what fMRI can tell us?



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## Abstract

The use of functional magnetic resonance imaging ("fMRI") has expanded rapidly since its inception in 1990 (Ogawa et al., 1990), making it the cornerstone of neuroimaging in cognitive neuroscience (Logothetis, 2008). fMRI measures haemodynamic change arising from enhanced neural activity, particularly suiting it to experimental and clinical investigations of brain function; indeed, it has become the fundamental technique in understanding brain mechanisms, providing information on both neuroanatomical and functional organisation of the brain. fMRI has been pivotal in our understanding of placebo effects. Whilst placebo effects are evidenced in an extensive range of medical conditions, notably Parkinson's disease (Lidstone et al., 2010) and depression (Kirsch & Sapirstein, 1998), the most studied are pain and analgesia (Benedetti, 2009). In this article I consider fMRI's contributions to current knowledge of placebo analgesia, and discuss the particular strengths and constraints of this neuroimaging technique. I conclude that fMRI has played an invaluable role in testing and improving theories of placebo analgesia (Wager & Atlas, 2013), and recent innovations such as spinal fMRI (Eippert et al., 2009b) and identification of genetic biomarkers of placebo responders (Hall & Kaptchuk, 2013) look set to advance this further.

## What is a placebo?

A placebo is an inactive substance or simulated intervention administered for psychophysiological benefits, usually under deception; and placebo effects are the beneficial effects arising from sham treatments. Placebos have been widely used in healing for many centuries; indeed, until recently the history of medicine has basically been the history of placebo effects (Shapiro & Shapiro, 1997). Although initially dismissed as experimental or clinical artefacts, placebo effects are now recognised as very 'real' phenomena (Harrington, 1999). They are evidenced in animals (Muñana, Zhang, & Patterson, 2010), children (Rheims et al., 2008), and even without deception (Kaptchuk et al., 2010). Placebos come in many forms, including: pills; creams; inhalants; injections; procedures such as ultrasound (Hashish, Harvey, & Harris, 1985) and surgery (Moseley

et al., 2002); and the medical practitioner him/herself (Kaptchuk, 2002). There is not one single placebo effect, but many (Benedetti, 2008). They are highly variable, being negligible in some individuals but substantial in others (Benedetti, 2009), and although any medical intervention is variable since not all patients respond to active treatments, placebos are extremely unpredictable. Furthermore, they are controversial: when and how to use them is an ethical minefield, and some argue that certain treatments are entirely placebo, for example acupuncture (Leibing et al., 2002) and homeopathy (Shang et al., 2005).

Understanding placebo mechanisms is important, not only because placebo control groups are integral to clinical trials in evidence-based medicine, but because placebo effects are an intrinsic part of the treatment itself. Indeed, there are two components to any medical treatment: the direct pharmacological or physiological action of the intervention, and the placebo element. This is clearly demonstrated when pain-relief is administered covertly: its analgesic effect is less potent than when administration is open; e.g. a covert 6-8mg morphine intravenous line was as potent for postoperative analgesia as an overt 6-8mg saline injection (Levine et al., 1981). It is fundamental that clinicians and researchers acknowledge the placebo component of active medical interventions; efficacy of treatments may depend on it. By understanding placebo effects we can harness them to maximise health, minimize costs and reduce side effects. A further issue beyond the scope of this article is that nocebo (adverse placebo) effects can also occur (Kong et al., 2008).

## Understanding how we perceive pain

Neuroimaging has significantly advanced our understanding of the neural correlates of pain perception (Tracey & Mantyh, 2007) and a large, distributed brain network that has been implicated in pain perception, known as the 'pain-matrix' (Iannetti & Mouraux, 2010). It is important to note that the term, 'pain matrix' refers to those brain regions activated when pain stimuli have been administered during a functional scan; and as such, 'pain matrix' activity does not necessarily mean that the person is experiencing

pain. Different factors moderate the experience of pain: the context of the pain has an impact (pain beliefs, expectation and placebo); the individual's mood is also relevant (such as their level of anxiety or depression, or tendency to catastrophize); cognitive set moderates pain (attention to the pain, distraction, hyper-vigilance and catastrophizing); chemical and structure moderates pain experience (such as maladaptive plasticity, neurodegeneration, and metabolic systems); and the injury itself (Tracey & Mantyh, 2007).

The interaction of these factors influences the activities of specific regions, and pain emerges from the integration and flow of information within these regions. Although the areas comprising the pain-matrix are therefore equivocally defined (Tracey & Mantyh, 2007), there is consensus as to which are central to pain experience. A meta-analysis of pain neuroimaging studies (Apkarian et al., 2005) clarifies the most common pain regions as primary and secondary somatosensory cortex, insula, thalamus, anterior cingulate cortex ("ACC"), and prefrontal cortices.

The regions primarily associated with pain processing were the focus of two fMRI experiments by Wager et al., (2004). They first hypothesised that if placebo reduces the experience of pain, then this predicts reduced fMRI blood oxygen level dependent ("BOLD") signal in the pain matrix, indicating reduced neural activity in pain regions, during pain compared to baseline. This prediction was confirmed, the magnitude of signal reductions correlating with decreases in pain ratings (Wager et al., 2004). The second hypothesis was that placebo creates expectations of pain relief, which then inhibit activity in pain regions, thereby modulating pain matrix activity. Wager et al., (2004) tested this by imaging not only the time period of the pain experience, but also the time period of the expectation of pain. Because the pre-frontal cortex ("PFC") is associated with maintenance of internal representations of expectations and goals, and it exerts top-down control of other brain areas (Miller & Cohen, 2001), it was hypothesised that PFC activation would be stronger during the time-period of pain expectation. This prediction was confirmed with the finding that stronger PFC activation during pain anticipation correlated with placebo analgesia ratings and also with reduced activation in the pain-matrix (Wager et al., 2004). Subsequent fMRI studies have replicated these reductions in healthy controls (Eippert et al., 2009a), and in clinical samples (Price et al., 2007), thereby demonstrating that regions associated with placebo analgesia can be generalized beyond the experimental scenario (Wager & Atlas, 2013).

Wager et al.'s (2004) study is important in several respects. Methodologically, it exemplifies two particular strengths of fMRI as an experimental technique. First, it enables focus on specific regions of interest, but also has the capacity to image activation of entire neural networks (Logothetis, 2008). This has particular implications for theory, supporting investigations of distributed network theories (e.g. Haxby, Hoffman, & Gobbini, 2000) and modular theories alike. Secondly, fMRI provides a unique window into the dynamics of in

vivo brain function. This was utilised to great effect by Wager et al., (2004), using temporal changes to plot the time-course of placebo analgesia in the brain. Indeed, these fresh insights enabled the authors to speculate that decreases late in the pain response may reflect a triggering of opioid mechanisms from prolonged pain, or may reflect cognitive reappraisal of pain levels (Wager et al., 2004).

From a theoretical perspective, Wager et al.'s (2004) study provides converging evidence supporting the central role of insula, ACC, and thalamus within the pain-matrix. Its findings suggest that placebo manipulations reduce neural responses in pain regions, thereby refuting a previous suggestion that placebo effects are merely reporting bias (Hróbjartsson & Gøtzsche, 2001). But perhaps more importantly, it provides preliminary evidence (albeit correlational) for a mechanism involved in placebo analgesia: the role of expectation.

### The role of expectation

As mentioned earlier, there are many placebo effects (Benedetti, 2008). Expectancy theory and classical conditioning are the main models of placebo effects (Stewart-Williams & Podd, 2004); and although underlying mechanisms differ, they share a common component: expectation (Lidstone & Stoessl, 2007). The processes by which expectation is translated into biological responses remain uncertain. However one proposed mechanism is that expectation induces a biochemical response from pre-frontal and limbic regions that drives endogenous opioid release (Lidstone & Stoessl, 2007). Wager et al.'s (2004) findings are consistent with opioid systems being modulated by prefrontal, cortically-driven anticipation of analgesia, and are substantially supported by subsequent research (Lidstone & Stoessl, 2007). For example, an fMRI study by Eippert et al., (2009b) found that placebo analgesia to heat stimulation was coupled with decreased nociceptive processing in the spinal cord, thought likely to be mediated by the descending pain processing system via a gate control system. The reduced BOLD responses observed are thought likely to be caused by endogenous opioids (Eippert et al., 2009b), since opioid antagonists block placebo analgesia (Benedetti et al., 2005). Eippert et al., (2009b) demonstrates spinal cord fMRI, a relatively new technique that has only recently become technically feasible (Meissner et al., 2011). Spinal fMRI poses unique challenges: small cross-sectional dimensions; motion of blood, cerebrospinal fluid, adjacent organs and the spinal cord itself; and bone and cartilage causing magnetic field inhomogeneity (Stroman, 2005). But importantly, this technique enables researchers to investigate early stages of pain processing.

### Using fMRI in combination with other techniques

A favoured technique for monitoring neurotransmitters in vivo has been positron emission tomography ("PET"), because of the wide range of tracers it can employ; however unlike fMRI, PET is invasive. PET is also more

expensive and carries a burden of logistical requirements such as on-site synthesis. fMRI has been instrumental in substantiating PET findings, compensating for its poor temporo-spatial resolution; indeed, some studies (e.g. Scott et al., 2007) use both techniques in conjunction. The first ever meta-analysis of placebo analgesia (Amanzio et al., 2013) combines the data of haemodynamic changes from 9 fMRI studies and 2 PET studies. This convergence of findings identified significant clusters broadly consistent with areas involved with pain and analgesia (Amanzio et al., 2013). Importantly, analysis differentiated activations during different stages of placebo analgesia: the expectation stage; the noxious stimulation stage; and stimulation stage deactivations (Amanzio et al., 2013). The cortical networks modulating placebo analgesia were found to substantially overlap emotional processing networks, suggesting that anxiety reduction is a component placebo mechanism arising from a functional-anatomical relationship between these networks (Amanzio et al., 2013). The finding of decreased activation in pain-matrix areas during noxious stimulation indicates down-regulation of nociceptive networks (Amanzio et al., 2013).

There are issues to be overcome when amalgamating results in a meta-analysis. Assumptions must be made regarding inevitable heterogeneous methodologies in segmentation, motion correction, and registration. Moreover, fMRI literature reflects a high degree of flexibility in analysis methods and data collection (Carp, 2012), features that can lead to bias (Ioannidis, 2005). To minimize reference-frame and scale bias, Amanzio et al., (2013) used the Activation Likelihood Estimation ("ALE") quantitative voxel-based method (Laird et al., 2005). Furthermore, they addressed inter-subject and inter-laboratory variability in fMRI data using an algorithm to estimate spatial uncertainty of foci, taking sample size differences into account. The number of studies used is not high because of the paucity of the literature; however, data was sourced from 199 participants (Amanzio et al., 2013). Of these, the gender of 33% was unspecified, potentially confounding in two respects: first, evidence suggests qualitative differences in pain perception between males and females (Henderson, Gandevia, & Macefield, 2008); and secondly, there are generic anatomical differences between male and female brains (Good et al., 2001). Nevertheless, objectively summarising results of small, possibly statistically-underpowered studies (Carp, 2012), provides a broad perspective of the field, enabling contributions from small and/or unpublished studies to be more useful, and identifying convergences as well as gaps in research.

Substantial evidence supports a primary role for expectation-activated endogenous opioids in placebo analgesia (Murray & Stoessl, 2013), however placebo effects can also be non-opioid. Although very little is known about non-opioid neurotransmission (Benedetti, 2009), a study by Scott et al., (2007) provides insight into simultaneous opioid and dopamine activation during placebo analgesia, thereby supporting a relationship between placebo and reward mechanisms.

The nucleus accumbens is central to reward-expectation encoding (Day, Jones, & Carelli, 2011). In a PET study Scott et al., (2007) demonstrated that dopamine neurotransmission in the nucleus accumbens increases as a function of placebo analgesia effectiveness. They report a second experiment that used fMRI to investigate this further. This found that participants demonstrating the greatest BOLD activations in nucleus accumbens during a reward-anticipation task also showed higher placebo analgesic responses in expectation and pain trials. Furthermore, combining data from those participating in both PET and fMRI experiments revealed positive correlations between dopamine release in nucleus accumbens during anticipation of analgesia, and right nucleus accumbens BOLD activity during reward anticipation (Scott et al., 2007). This study provides evidence that mesolimbic dopaminergic pathways are involved in placebo analgesia (Faria, Fredrikson, & Furmark, 2008), and also demonstrates the strategic use of fMRI in conjunction with other complementary techniques to provide multimodal converging evidence (Logothetis, 2008).

## Conclusion

Psychological theories that are biologically-informed by brain evidence are most likely to provide valid, generalizable predictions, since they are grounded by the constraints that are intrinsic to the appropriate physiological systems (Wager & Atlas, 2013). Because of this, fMRI has played a pivotal role in developing theories of placebo analgesia; and despite the ethical issues constraining the use of placebos in clinical settings, fMRI has also proved invaluable in patient studies of placebo analgesia (Price et al., 2007). It has been used with versatility to map pain/analgesia processing from cortex to spinal cord (Eippert et al., 2009b), and successfully used in conjunction with PET (Scott et al., 2007), thereby demonstrating its importance within a multimodal approach to understanding brain function (Logothetis, 2008). fMRI is undoubtedly a powerful technique, with the advantage of being non-invasive yet able to image dynamic brain function in vivo with reasonable spatiotemporal resolution (Logothetis, 2008). However, it has limitations that must be considered. fMRI is an indirect measure of neural activity, and is correlational not causal, therefore inferences that activated areas are necessary or sufficient in a process cannot be made (Poldrack, 2008). This can be somewhat compensated by using fMRI as a complementary technique within a multimodal approach, such as in Scott et al., (2007), discussed earlier. More problematic is the ambiguity of the BOLD signal, which is unable to clearly differentiate between excitation and inhibition, neuromodulation and function-specific processing, and bottom-up and top-down signalling (Logothetis, 2008). Until scientists can unravel this complexity, caution with signal interpretation must be exercised.

fMRI has significantly advanced our understanding of placebo analgesia, clarifying the involvement of pain-matrix anatomy, and implicating endogenous opioids as a common placebo mechanism. fMRI has informed theory in two ways: first, by enabling comparisons



between neural activations of placebo versus psychopharmacological treatments; and secondly, by suggesting new avenues for testing. Many questions remain unanswered: whether placebo uses the same mechanisms; the role of gender; how placebo analgesia is moderated in the brain by associative learning, by hormones such as oxytocin (Kessner et al., 2013) and by personality traits; and how the patient-practitioner relationship may also play a pivotal role in treatment outcomes (Hall & Kaptchuk, 2013). Researchers have started to address another challenge, identifying genetic biomarkers of those individuals who respond well to placebos (Hall & Kaptchuk, 2013). It is hoped that in the near future this may enable drugs and trials to be more specifically tailored to the particular characteristics of the patient. Neuroimaging advances such as human spinal cord fMRI (Eippert et al., 2009b), have contributed to research and expansion of knowledge. This knowledge has the potential to enhance the veracity of clinical trials and the efficacy of medical interventions (Price, Finniss, & Benedetti, 2008), thereby improving the lives of patients.

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# “Geography...so what do you actually study?”

## Co-production of knowledge: a postgraduate reflection on teaching and learning in higher education



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### Abstract

"What do you study" is a question which I have been frequently asked over the last five years since I began as a geography undergraduate at the University of Birmingham, and now as a postgraduate at the University of Bristol. In this journal style paper I reflect on how my understanding and explanations of geography have changed throughout my time in higher education as a means to reflect on wider practices of teaching and learning of geography in higher education. It will be shown that co-production of knowledge in learning and teaching in higher education occurs through a variety of means; distinctions between human and physical geography which relate to the understanding of school students, co-production beyond formal learning environments, co-production through community impacts of research, and the co-production of knowledge relating to differing expertise of higher education institutions both within the UK and beyond.

Co-production was the theme of the 2014 Royal Geographical Society (RGS) Annual Conference. This paper was originally written on this theme for the RGS's Higher Education Research Group reflective essay competition, for which the paper was the winning entry. I consider the co-production of knowledge to reflect on teaching and learning as a geography student in higher education. For reflections over space and time I use a journal style paper inspired by the style for a piece of undergraduate coursework at the University of Birmingham. The first column gives vignettes of experiences of co-production which are analysed in the second column. I will show that I have experienced co-production of knowledge in relation to secondary school geography, beyond formal learning environments including community based research, and across UK and international higher education institutions.

### Conversation with elderly congregation members at church

**September 2009**

"What are you going to study at university?"

I'm going to do a BSc in geography, but I like physical geography the most so that involves learning about the processes in which landscapes are made - glaciers, rivers, mountains. I will do some human geography too though; the BSc and the BA at Birmingham give the same options which is one of the reasons I chose to go there<sup>1</sup>. I hope I get to go on some good fieldtrips, maybe one to Iceland to go on a glacier again, I liked doing that on holiday with my parents<sup>2</sup>.

1. Prior to starting my undergraduate degree I was aware that my A-level subjects (geography, history and philosophy & ethics) were more suited to human than physical geography, but had enjoyed physical geography more at school. As will subsequently be examined this later came a full circle in terms of specialising in my undergraduate degree.

2. Arguably at a younger age it can be easier to experience physical geography than human geography, as a glacier or mountain can clearly be seen, whilst the A-level topics of urbanisation and development can be less tangible for a school student without the full appreciation that these do in fact impinge upon everyday life.

## Geography ambassadors school visit to year 7 class<sup>3</sup>

**November 2011**

"What is geography?"

Today we are going to talk to you about why we love geography<sup>4</sup>. I study human geography and Faye studies physical geography<sup>5</sup>. I therefore study people and places whilst Faye studies natural landscapes such as river courses.

3. The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) Geography Ambassador programme is part of the RGS's education initiative in which university students and graduates meet with secondary school children, for example on school visits or study days hosted at the RGS. The aim is show the opportunities and benefits of studying geography in higher education and beyond (RGS, 2014).

4. An RGS Geography Ambassador "I love geography" talk uses the experiences of geography (under)graduates to show a passion and excitement for geography in higher education to school students who could follow this path themselves. Participation in this scheme is therefore an example of co-production between university and secondary school students.

5. A binary is often perceived between human and physical geography, and qualitative/quantitative methods which is an issue that has been debated for several decades (Bryman, 1984; Olsen, 2004). Whilst it can be useful to explain the basics of geography, as in this example for 11 year olds who may not have studied geography as a separate subject before, such a binary can be unhelpful in providing unnecessary barriers in what is ultimately within one discipline. Indeed, in co-production of geographical knowledge beyond academia such as in the school classroom, this binary can be a hindrance to understanding the wider uses and implications of geography beyond academia. This example therefore shows that within higher education and the dissemination of knowledge it can be helpful to address the human/physical geography and qualitative/quantitative debate on a case-by-case basis and accept that different methods can meet different aims (Onwugebuzie and Leech, 2005; Punch, 2001).

## University of Birmingham dance society ballet class

**March 2012**

Member of the class: "I saw some people walking around campus blindfolded today... odd!"

Ballet teacher/housemate: "Ah yes that'd be the third year geographers. Stephanie was telling me it's something about space"

6. In my second and third years at the University of Birmingham I was introduced to the ideas of performativity and non-representational theories, which in the third year involved a questioning of the use

of space. In one piece of coursework, four interventions were carried out to analyse how our own bodies were situated in space, which included walking as a pair with another member of the group around campus with one person at a time blindfolded and the other guiding to experience space without one the main senses; sight. This not only introduced me to what would become the foundations of my PhD but also made a wider impact as people reacted to the interventions around campus, which as seen in the dance class then produced conversations beyond geography about what the students were doing. Learning in higher education therefore has the potential to extend beyond formal learning hours and "contact time", generating conversations in social situations and hence wider co-productions.

## Conversation with elderly congregation members at church

**April 2012**

"What have you been doing this term?"

This term has been busy but I've really enjoyed it. I did a placement<sup>7</sup> at a community hub in inner city Birmingham which was very different to where the university is in Edgbaston to the south-west of the city centre and to my previous life experiences. I analysed a community project which had been running and now need to write a report about my findings which they will be able to use in their funding applications as well as provide an overall review for moving forward in projects. Funding is a real issue for their activities but an academic report should help in providing a different perspective, so I hope it is useful<sup>8</sup>.

I also went on a week fieldtrip to Moscow last February which I loved<sup>9</sup>. Yes, it was very cold! When temperatures reached 0°C that was warm. What did we do? Well lots of different projects but it included looking at the role that the Soviet past plays in Moscow today, faith landscapes, and the production of space in Moscow. We visited Moscow State University which was interesting too, a huge and a very striking building!<sup>10</sup>

7. "Professional placements for geographers" was one module option available in my third year at the University of Birmingham. Following an interview process individual community based placements were allocated with a report to be produced around a research question requested by the community initiative the student was involved with. This is therefore an example of the range of opportunities beyond traditional lecture/seminar formats which are possible in higher education.

8. The placement was an example of co-production between academia and communities. Whilst it was hoped the report produced would benefit the community and help access project funding, equally I could not have written the report without interviews and participant observation at the community hub, and this counted as credits towards my degree and hence the achievement of a qualification. There was therefore



not only co-production of knowledge, but ideally also co-production of benefits across learning in higher education and community development.

9. At the University of Birmingham there is an option for a considerable portion of a geography degree to specialise in post-Soviet and Russian geography (Moran, 2009). I specifically remember seeing this in the undergraduate at the age of 17 when deciding which university to attend and frowning as I was revising A-level history on Russia from 1855 to 1956 and thinking I would be glad to leave this behind at university. However, at that point I also saw my interests in physical geography so only gave a cursory glance to the human geography modules that would be available. Little did I realise that three years later I would draw upon my A-level history knowledge with enthusiasm and develop a fascination common amongst human geography students taking these modules (including the fieldtrip to Moscow) to question the co-production of knowledge between the Soviet and post-Soviet era. Co-production in learning and teaching can therefore be seen at a number of levels; there is co-production for students building upon their previously acquired perceptions and knowledge (which as in this instance may be unexpected), and secondly, as shown by Moran (2009) and Moran and Round (2010) there is co-production from the students in developing the modules.

10. There were both similarities and differences to learning and teaching immediately evident between studying in Birmingham and Moscow from our (albeit brief) visit to Moscow State University (MSU). First, obviously there was a language difference with courses given in English and Russian respectively. Secondly, there is a comparison of the university buildings themselves, as shown in figures 1 and 2. Whilst the University of Birmingham's redbrick buildings are impressive the MSU main building is one of Stalin's "teeth" and an example of iconic Stalinist architecture at an almost incomparable scale - the Aston Webb building at Birmingham is several floors tall topped with large domes, but in the MSU photograph in figure 1 approximately each window represents one floor level making over 20 levels. In a question I asked to a Human Geography lecturer at MSU around Stalinist architecture and memory she replied that buildings such as that of MSU did help contribute to a positive memory of Stalin. However, once sitting in a lecture theatre and walking around the department the appearance and atmosphere was familiar with typical benches and desks in the lecture theatre, notice boards around the department, and a canteen for students to eat in. In this context the fieldtrip to Moscow was therefore an example of differences and similarities in the co-production of knowledge and learning in higher education in different countries. There is however, also a line of argument around learning and production in higher education across countries that may be harder to appreciate from my own positionality; that those outside of the UK and USA studying geography can be marginalised by their location and writing in languages other than English, particularly when submitting work to be published in international journals (Robinson, 2003; Jazeel and

McFarlane, 2010).



Figure 1: Moscow State University, main building (Author, February 2012)



Figure 2: University of Birmingham, Aston Webb buildings (Author, May 2012)

## Conversation with relatives

September 2013

"A masters and PhD? What on?"

No I haven't been on a fieldtrip to trek on a glacier, but yes I'm going to do a masters in human geography and then a PhD<sup>11</sup>. The PhD is about the geography of religion with a specific philosophical approach called non-representational theory but that's hard to explain<sup>12</sup>. I want to use the theory as a means to understand the functioning of social action in the Church of England and have a direct community impact from my research<sup>13</sup>.

11. My expectations of my research interests therefore changed from when I started my undergraduate degree and graduated as I began envisaging a physical geography or environmental management career but have continued to a masters in human geography. My expectations of human and physical geography from school geography were therefore challenged through learning in higher education which arguably is a statement with the greatest implications for school GCSE and A-level syllabuses. Indeed, the difference of knowledge on

school syllabuses and topics studied at university is one of the difficulties I have faced as an RGS Geography Ambassador in explaining to school students how human geography at university would not necessarily fulfil their preconceptions of the school human geography subject. Whilst teaching non-representational theories at A-level is unlikely to be realistic there could be considerably greater overlap between the human geography of schools and higher education, therefore presenting an opportunity for increased co-production of learning and knowledge.

12. Linking to the previous debate on school students' preconceptions of human geography, explaining non-representational theories beyond academia is difficult, partly as it leads people to ideas of psychology or sociology as they remember the maps and capital cities of their school geography lessons which are far removed from much of human geography in higher education today. There are therefore huge opportunities for wider public engagement between what is learnt in higher education and dissemination to the wider general public to both dispel geographical myths and show new avenues of enquiry for those who might not have considered the geography of their school days relevant to their work and lives today.

13. Following from the ideals of the Birmingham community hub placement, it is important to me that my PhD will have a tangible and real community impact to give direct co-production of knowledge between my research and the communities and organisations involved.

## Conversation with undergraduate geography friends

December 2013

"So how is the masters going - one term in now?"

I am really enjoying it so far! It's been quite different to Birmingham as there is a lot more philosophy and politics on my course<sup>14</sup>, and more seminar learning than lectures but that could just be a difference of being a postgraduate to undergraduate and having a much smaller number of people on the course<sup>15</sup>.

14. The School of Geographical Sciences at Bristol has an established interest and specialism in the philosophical dimension of human geography, which as with the majority of universities - and rightly so - impacts upon the content of both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Similarly, in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Birmingham there is (amongst others) an established specialism of Soviet and post-Soviet studies (Moran and Round, 2010). Students are therefore able to benefit from a co-production of knowledge as their knowledge is increased through learning about their lecturers' specialism and knowledge. The impact of geographical canons can therefore to some extent be seen here as what it taught be can determined by what is considered important which varies temporally and spatially (Mayhew, forthcoming). The co-production of

knowledge between students and lecturers therefore also varies spatially and temporally within higher education meaning different opportunities may be presented at different higher education institutions.

15. There have therefore been differences between undergraduate and postgraduate learning, although these equally could be differences between ways of learning at different universities or on different courses, for example other undergraduates at the University of Birmingham had more seminars whilst I personally predominantly had lectures which has been a key difference to my postgraduate learning at Bristol. In both possibilities this shows the diversity of learning and teaching in higher education and the variety of means through which co-production of knowledge between student and lecturer/teacher can be experienced.

## Conclusions

I conclude that co-production of knowledge in the experience of geography in higher education is varied and wide reaching across both space and time. Co-production of knowledge across time has been particularly evident as experience contributed to development in my understanding of what the discipline of geography can entail. It has also been seen that knowledge production occurs beyond formal teaching environments through informal conversations, experiences on fieldtrips, and community based research projects. The author's positionality is crucial to this conversation, making each individual's co-production of knowledge unique.

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# Five more years of this: Introduction to a post election symposium



Frederick Harry Pitts

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Alongside conventional academic journal articles, Tor will also feature written work in a range of other formats. These may be less scholarly in style, but no less scholarly in content. They may be shorter in length, but just as long on ideas. The journal particularly encourages current affairs opinion and commentary. The traditional gestation period of a thesis or a paper prevents timely response to moving issues. But Tor represents an excellent opportunity for scholars to apply their expertise to contemporary talking points as they happen.

For this inaugural edition, the journal invited comment-style submissions addressing the most significant of recent events: the 2015 General Election. The resulting symposium of short reflections ruminates on the lay of the land post-election. The contributions each address a different aspect of the election and its aftermath. Some consider the performance of political parties. Others assess specific policy issues. Others still consider the global context of the next parliament. What unites them is that they prime the reader on what to expect in this most unexpected of new parliaments. Contributors include academics and graduate students from the three institutions of the South West Doctoral Training Centre: the University of Exeter, the University of Bath, and the University of Bristol. True to the interdisciplinary spirit of the DTC, contributors focus on areas relevant to their research interests. They bring subject-specific expertise to issues often elided or overlooked in the churn of the political news cycle. Not every aspect is covered. Of many big stories, the rise of the SNP and the success of the Conservatives receive no specific commentary. But the pieces discuss an array of issues, some well-covered since the election, and some that need further attention. To the well-covered, they add new scholarly perspectives. To the rest, they induct the reader into some crucial upcoming policy challenges.

In this introduction, I will give a taster of what is to follow. I will draw links between the entries by wagering some additional observations and speculations about the election and the next five years. I will place specific focus on prospects for the UK left,

where, in my opinion, interesting things could happen over the course of the next parliament. To a certain extent, my reflections will be limited to England. English politics is in flux, in a way that Scotland's are not, for instance. Scotland has made a break with the political order. England might yet do the same. The situation, of course, is distinct in Wales and Northern Ireland.

We open with three pieces reflecting on the performance and present prospects of three UK political parties: Labour, UKIP and the Liberal Democrats. In the first of these pieces, **Lewis Coyne** assays Labour's loss and the options available to them as they seek to recover. Coyne casts a critical eye over the internal debate accompanying the post-Miliband leadership election. Party soul-searchers typically bemoan a failure to connect with one or another group of voters. For the left, the working class, lost to abstention in England and the SNP in Scotland. For the right, the middle, lost to the Tories in England. But, for Coyne, this conceals the need for Labour to recast itself as a movement dependent on no single base of support.

Most accounts of Labour's defeat emphasise voters rather than non-voters. One popular narrative is that Labour lost middle-class votes by appealing too little to 'aspiration'. Another is that votes leaked to the Tories because of a perceived lack of economic 'credibility'. But one of the more persuasive arguments concerns those who did not vote rather than those who did. This has become known as the 'lazy Labour' explanation (Holehouse 2015). It not only explains Labour's defeat, but the wildly inaccurate polling in the run up to the election. Polling overestimated Labour support because their historical, latent voter base told pollsters they would turn out on the day but ended up staying at home. Labour's failure to connect with these voters lost them the election. This, we hear, is Ed Miliband's preferred interpretation of his defeat (Eaton 2015).

This resonates with the analysis given by Jon Trickett (2015). Trickett's data suggests that Labour not only retained but improved their middle-class support. It was actually among working-class voters that Labour



leaked support. This gives the lie to the familiar argument that Labour was too left-wing and did not do enough to secure the votes of middle-class voters. Instead, Trickett's data suggests, Labour insufficiently enthused poorer, working-class voters. They did not do enough to differentiate themselves from the other parties to represent a viable option for those in lowest economic bands. In England, these people did not turn out to vote. In Scotland, they turned out to vote for a party occupying a position on the populist left: the SNP.

The next contribution communicates the importance of looking at non-voters as much as those who did vote. Voter turnout features prominently in **Aurelien Mondon's** analysis of UKIP as an electoral phenomenon. Against the fulsome coverage presented in the UK media, Mondon paints a bleak picture for UKIP's figurehead Nigel Farage. His party's performance may seem significant percentage-wise. But when considered against overall voter turnout, it looks far less impressive. As Mondon notes, 33.9 per cent of registered voters abstained from voting on the day, not to mention those who did not register in the first place. This means that UKIP managed to secure fewer than one in ten of the available votes. This is despite optimum press coverage. Political debate skewed onto Farage's favoured terrain whenever the UKIP leader appeared on television or radio. But support for UKIP's 'nativist', 'neo-racist' right-wing populism, Mondon suggests, is strikingly meagre. UKIP's significance instead pertains to the effect wielded on political discourse through the media. Mondon contends that the party is a 'decoy' for politicians of other stripes to use as a means to shift political debate elsewhere.

Mondon ends by recommending that the bubbling debate about the limits of political representation focus less on how well UKIP or any other party did or should have done. Rather, it should focus more on 'the vast majority of the population who votes or does not vote'. Indeed, I would suggest that a focus on the latter could also help Labour understand the scale of their loss. It owes, perhaps, not to a failure to engage already-enfranchised middle-class voters. Instead, it may owe to an inability to offer a convincing political reflection of reality for the disconnected, overworked and underemployed. In Scotland, a party managed to do this to a much greater extent, annihilating Labour in the process. But what happened North of the border does not tell the whole story. Labour lost in England, too.

In the third contribution, **Rebecca Tidy** gives an insight into Liberal Democrat election strategy. She considers where it erred, and how the party recovers. Tidy emphasises the Lib Dems' previous success running candidates with strong records of local campaigning. She recommends that selection procedures return to sourcing candidates with established constituency backgrounds. This, she contends, will get the Lib Dems back on track.

But can the Lib Dems recover through a local strategy votes lost through national complicity in a coalition abhorred by many of their potential supporters? Tidy

suggests that, by playing to their traditional localised strengths, the party can recover. But one feels their best bet may be to wait for a future realignment of the centre-left in the event of Labour's implosion. Some, such as Jon Cruddas, suggest that Labour may not exist within a year, rendered extinct by a Spain-style surge of the radical left (Holehouse and Knapton 2015). Others contend that Labour has 'outlived its usefulness' (Todd 2015). Belonging to another time, it may be 'Pasokified' (Doran 2015), just as the social democrats were in Greece. Its end may unfold in any number of ways. The fragile balance of its internal contradictions may be lost if either left or right exert too great a pull after the leadership election. If Liz Kendall heads up a Blairite resurgence, the unions could finally take their substantial heft elsewhere to forge a new political party of the left. If, by some miracle, the non-aligned left join Labour en masse and vote Jeremy Corbyn in as leader, the Progress faction will leave and form a new SDP. One could plausibly imagine the Lib Dems assimilating into the latter post-Labour rump.

But there may be a role for the Lib Dems in an altogether rosier outcome. Pressure group Compass propose a 'progressive' electoral pact motivated by the pursuit of proportional representation (2015). The pact, supporters suggest, would witness a cessation of hostilities between Labour, the Greens and the Lib Dems in England for the next election. It would even extend to giving SNP candidates a free run in Scotland, and, presumably, Plaid Cymru in Wales. They would campaign on a platform of PR, from which all would benefit, and upon which Labour may depend for its survival (Bastani 2015, Hind 2015).

The trouble with such putative pacts is the pitch. They are phrased in terms of 'progressiveness'. But 'progressive' is a largely meaningless term imported from the different political context of the United States. For many, progress is less of a selling point than standstill. Some want to roll things back, not push them forwards. Why propel the world further and faster on its present trajectory, when we can stop it and get off? On both the left and the right, Green and UKIP, voters are circumspect about hurtling forwards into a false gleaming future. For the first, environmental collapse awaits. For the latter, untrammelled immigration and the European super-state. Any 'progressive' political pact must contend with these conservative realities. And this is not only about the right. A left conservatism is something considered, albeit in a foreshortened way, by the 'Blue Labour' faction of Cruddas, Maurice Glasman et al (Mardell 2015). The left will spend a lot of time defending things under attack from the forces of capital in the next five years. Further 'progress' along the lines implied in the epithet 'progressive' will be the last thing on their minds. We have lived with capitalist 'progress' for some time now, sadly. And some, unsurprisingly, want to escape.

The aforementioned eventualities may sound unlikely- splits, new parties, pacts. But the only thing predictable about the next five years is their unpredictability. The EU referendum and the attendant

prospect of second Scottish Indyref in the event of Brexit add a layer of overarching political uncertainty. Cameron faces trouble keeping unruly ministers loyal to whichever party line the PM takes on Europe (Watt and Wintour 2015). Complicating matters further, Cameron plans to step down ahead of the next election. But more unpredictable still is how people react to another five years of cuts to welfare, reforms to employee protections and attacks on working conditions. There are plenty of big stories to come in the formal sphere of parliamentary politics. But the politics of the street, the staffroom and the picket line promise to be as significant. The Tory party and its traditional class constituency are emboldened by the promise of shredded red tape and restrictions on union freedoms. On the other side, the first two weeks of the new government provoked renewed street protests. These will only intensify as the new government picks fights over where the axe falls next. Resistance may coalesce around an identifiable electoral project. This would be in line with the 'electoral turn' witnessed elsewhere on the European left (Milburn 2015). The decision of some on the radical left to throw their lot in with the Green Party (Ollie V, 2015) could be a harbinger of things to come.

Could Labour's rightward shift catalyse a divorce within its ranks (Chessum 2015)? Might we see a new party funded by trade unions and composed initially of what is now the parliamentary Labour left? The numbers of the latter swelled with the 2015 intake, which is far more leftish than the last. Moreover, the flux in which Labour finds itself makes such possibilities perfectly discernible.

Scotland has a successful and populist left electoral force, in the shape of the SNP. It also has a grassroots social movement sprung from the energy of the Radical Independence Campaign. In the absence of any formal electoral movement of the left in England, the next five years may witness the building of grassroots alternatives. These may politicise social relations (Bonefeld 2014) rather than enter politics directly. They could circulate around food, housing, culture and relationships, and find ways to meet the need for them outside capitalist social forms. The rise of Syriza in Greece relied in part on the development of an alternative solidarity economy of foodbanks, for instance (Mason 2015a). Extended to our different, less desperate context, such innovations would not only respond to poverty and the retreat of the welfare state. They would also support new ways of living and relating to each other. Instead of addressing themselves to the seizure of state power, they would build an existence outside the nexus of commodities, money and labour. The next parliament will push a renewed programme of austerity and cuts. Those subject are presently deprived, in England at least, of an authentic party-political representation of the desire for any alternative to the present state of things. It will be interesting to see whether prefigurative projects will spring up over the next few years that address both the material and political impasse.

Government support is receding ever further. Projects like, say, 'communist foodbanks', may step in. They would turn, in an unsanctioned way, the government's own abandoned big society against them. The next contribution to the symposium concerns the role of foodbanks in the 'new welfare settlement' of Tory rule. In it, **Rana Jawad** suggests that cuts in welfare provision demand new approaches to poverty alleviation. The work of faith and charitable groups in setting up and running foodbanks has provided a much-needed source of support to those left behind by a lopsided labour market. Foodbanks may be auspiciously an 'emergency measure' forged in the aftermath of the economic crisis. But Jawad suggests that they are 'the best kept secret of British Social Policy'.

Jawad suggests that, in the UK, as many as one million people use foodbanks. Thus far, foodbanks have taken a strictly faith-based or charitable complexion in the UK. But, reading Jawad's piece prompts thoughts of new agendas. What further developments in this area might accompany the continued retrenchment of the welfare state under the new government? Could resistance to austerity come to resemble to same politicisation of everyday life attempted by Syriza in the far more acute Greek scenario? Bristol, home of the SWDTC, possesses many examples of an alternative economic infrastructure: food co-ops, a local currency, freeshops and shareshops, community supported agriculture and cafes serving free meals sourced from supermarket food waste. What new dimensions might all this assume in the next five years? Bristol witnessed a huge Green surge at the election. In Bristol one sees a possible basis for a politics unrestricted by the formal political realm of rhetoric, electioneering and policymaking. Rather, its purchase is on the ground. The strength of the Green Party suggests that Bristol's projects and movements may have found at least some existing electoral expression. Indeed, in London, Sian Berry, a Green candidate for the mayoral nomination, has promised 'bring the energy' of campaigns and movements 'into City Hall' (2015). Her role would be to channel in the formal political sphere the extra-parliamentary demands of movements embedded in everyday life. This indicates a potential combination of street politics, practical alternatives of cooperation and mutual aid, and a left 'electoral turn'. This potent mix will be worth a keenly kept eye in years to come.

The Green election campaign, exemplified in Bristol, held sway best as an expression of local sentiment rather than as a national programme for change. This perhaps owes to the poor performance of the party's leader, Natalie Bennett, on the national stage. The Greens performed well in Bristol, and achieved their best result in a UK election. But, nationally, the party acted as a vector of concerns quite apart from its founding purpose. Instead of the environment, the terrain upon which it fought concerned economic injustice and immigration. Indeed, the environment hardly featured in the electoral campaigns of any major party, the Greens included. The short-termist outlook of UK politics suggests that the environment will continue to be one of several elephants in the room.

Post-election, Cameron assigned the environment brief to a rare Tory climate change 'believer', Amber Rudd (see Carrington 2015). Meanwhile, he is beholden by virtue of his small majority to the sceptical right of his party. This suggests that green issues are by no means beyond political contention in this parliament. In the next contribution, **Nick Kirsop-Taylor** surveys the future of biodiversity offsetting. It illustrates how Cameron's pledge to be the 'greenest government ever' has collided with the reality of cuts to the Defra budget. Biodiversity offsetting is a mechanism whereby the environmental costs of building and development are repaid through new green initiatives elsewhere. Theoretically, when one tree falls, another is planted somewhere else. But, Kirsop-Taylor suggests, this policy is unlikely to survive the next parliament other than as a seldom-seen clause buried in planning rules.

Whatever comes of it, biodiversity offsetting is revealing of at least one government foible of both the last five years and the next. To tally up the cost of what is lost and how much is needed to replace it, the natural world must be measured and given a value. What should rightly escape the sphere of economic calculation is made subservient to it. As a 2014 Financial Times article on the topic attests (Wilson 2014), it is not always easy to establish a clear measure of value for flora and fauna, birds and bees. With difficulty, the violence of quantitative abstraction is wrought upon the wilderness. It acquires a monetary value, and becomes commensurate with other things in the world of commodities. It can then be traded, bought and sold. It is no accident that these policy proposals have coincided with recent, unsuccessful attempts to sell off Britain's forests (BBC 2013).

This same process occurs elsewhere in Tory reforms commenced in 2010. This is especially the case where they pertain to that which was formerly public shifting into private hands. Nowhere more so is this dialectic of measurement, privatisation and commodification in evidence than in education. In the next contribution, **Anna Edwards** assesses the ongoing 'quasi-marketisation' of secondary education. The transferring of public assets into private hands via academisation depends upon systems of measurement. They are akin to that practiced in the process of biodiversity offsetting. As Edwards notes, 'a market-based approach to the delivery of education [...] rests upon the assumption that we can accurately measure and compare school performance and educational standards'. Edwards suggests neither the Conservatives or Labour question the 'philosophical' viability of this measurement. It falls, then, to others to question the measures and valuations made.

On the one hand, the main political parties appeal to the good of the economy as an abstract, external force for which we are compelled to do our best. But, on the other hand, evidence of contestation is everywhere, when one looks for it. 'Value struggles' (Frenzel and Beverungen 2014) contest governmental or capitalist understandings of what something is 'worth'. They are surprisingly commonplace in the UK, despite being

rarely thought of as such. These struggles typically concern a few recurring themes. A resource facing cuts or privatization. The imposition of something lucrative to its owners but of little use to anyone else. The eradication or exploitation of heritage or green space. Many examples spring to mind. Grassroots campaigns to save local NHS services. Anti-fracking movements. Local groups fighting chain stores, supermarkets and big-name coffee shops dominating their high streets. These all pitch different visions of worth that undermine blind subservience to the 'economy'. They challenge the narrow quantitative understanding of value that the 'economy' implies. As the new Tory majority pursues an agenda of privatisation and marketization, expect these value struggles to intensify. Higher education may be a flashpoint, with staff and students foremost in fighting these struggles (Morgan 2015). There are few sectors with as much at stake from measurement, monitoring, commercialisation and privatisation.

In the next contribution, **Donna Clutterbuck** discusses the new government's approach to domestic violence. Clutterbuck highlights the contradictions of Tory policy. These contradictions are between not only words and actions, but within individual pieces of legislation. For instance, domestic violence legislation now makes provision for instances of coercive control. But this legislation does not specifically address gender. This absence is stark in light of statistical evidence showing that women are overwhelmingly more likely to be victims of domestic violence of all kinds. Further, funding cuts have severely inhibited the ability of support services to cope with demand. What is more, cuts to legal aid prevent women subject to domestic violence from seeking and gaining justice. Promised cuts to public spending, Clutterbuck writes, will further undermine Cameron's professed commitment to tackle violence against women.

The final two contributions turn to events outside the UK. In the penultimate piece, **Bruce Morley** highlights how the fortunes of the UK economy may have less to do with government policy than with the health and survival of the Euro. Morley begins by giving an overview of the history and present predicament of the Eurozone. He suggests that the UK could benefit from a fall in the strength of the pound 'in sympathy with the Euro'. This would increase exports and thus GDP. But, should the serious problems faced by the Euro explore, the UK will be badly burnt.

In that event, it will be interesting to see to whom Cameron and Osborne apportion blame for any decline in the British economy. They were elected in 2010 by holding Labour personally culpable for a global economic crash. They were re-elected in 2015 by claiming personal responsibility for the recovery. So far, so consistent. But if they endure either European or global instability at some time in the next parliament, personal responsibility will be a hot potato they will be loath to keep hold of. On one side of the green benches at least, the explanatory burden is sure to fall anywhere but upon the budgetary red box.

In the final contribution to the symposium, **Biao Zhang** considers the future prospects for the UK's relationship with China. Zhang describes how, in the last parliament, Cameron moved the UK much closer to China. Interestingly, Zhang situates this move in the context of Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States. The UK is a minor partner in relations with both the US and China, and will, Zhang suggests, choose between the two big powers in shifting ways that address specific needs: economic, political, military. One gets the impression of the UK as a silent, supine second-rater desperate to court others but always waiting on a call.

This brings to light a feature of this election and likely many more hence. The two main parties do not wish to discuss the big challenges and issues of the next decades (see Mason 2015b for an example). One is the growing irrelevance of the UK as a global player, forced to negotiate in the gaps between the tectonic plates of world power in East and West. A second relates also to the rise of China as an economic powerhouse, and it is with this aspect that I will end. The world of employment has changed in the UK. As manufacturing has gone East, so have the jobs associated with it and the lifestyles they implied. In a flexibilised low-skill service economy, unemployment and underemployment are permanent. They are unsolvable short of a restructuring and redistribution of working hours- a prospect far-fetched in the present system. Automation is a major possibility given nary a mention by any leading politician. It promises to make redundant the remaining few in possession of a full-time secure job (Frey and Osborne 2013, Lanchester 2015). In a society ill-prepared to countenance, let alone support, life without work, this represents an impending social disaster. Politicians compete with one another to penalise those who do not work or cannot find one of the few jobs available to the many forced to need them. Life is made intolerable without employment in a society that does not afford employment for all in the first place. More welfare cuts are to come. The imposition of workfare continues. Thus, the material conditions to be safe, secure, happy and fed will depend upon one's capacity to work for the foreseeable future. But the basis for this is rapidly eroding, and no politician will publicly note it. Sold on the lie that the system is here to stay, those subject to a society of work on the wane will only suffer. The next five years may not witness any confession or acknowledgement of it. But a social crisis is unfolding that will define the development of new political projects over the course of the next parliament. We have five years more of this- of further austerity, cuts to welfare and worsening precariousness. The party that best plugs into this prospectus stands to profit. Whether that party currently exists remains to be seen. An English Podemos may yet appear. Five more years may be a long time indeed.

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## Labour's "Triple-Bind": Why they lost and must change to survive



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Labour's defeat on the 7th of May was remarkable in its scale and speed. The widespread incredulity which greeted the 10pm exit poll swiftly gave way to resignation as it transpired that not only had Labour been all but wiped out – as expected – by the SNP in Scotland, but they had made almost no headway against the Conservatives in England and Wales. Although in the history of the party there have technically been greater defeats (in 1931 and 1983), Labour has arguably never been in a more perilous situation. Worse, few Labour politicians or sympathetic commentators appear to recognise this, and consequently their strategic prescriptions merely risk compounding the problem. Essential to Labour's defeat is the opinion polling debacle. In 2012 Labour appeared to open a sizable lead in the polls. This was attributed to three factors: the conversion of 2010 Liberal Democrat voters to Labour, the rise of UKIP initially at the expense of the Conservatives, and the standard 'swing voters' moving between the Tories and Labour. This formed the basis of a strategy to secure a mere 35% of the vote, proven to be sufficient for a majority government by the 2005 victory. Labour's lead gradually fell over the course of three years to an election-day tie with the Conservatives at 34%, apparently leaving Labour with every chance of forming the next government. The flaw in the plan, however, was that the polls were systematically overstating Labour support, and thus the strategy was built on sand.

The cause of this consistent inaccuracy is currently the subject of an enquiry by the British Polling Council, but post-election research provides sufficient evidence for an analysis of the final result. According to some, the reason Labour lost is that they were too left-wing: as a result of their narrow strategy, Labour failed to occupy the political centre ground and speak to the aspirations of middle England. Within the party, Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson, amongst others, point to Labour's loss of key marginal seats in England as proof that the country defaulted to the Conservatives for the above reasons.

Others, such as Owen Jones and Len McCluskey, have noted in response note that Labour's wholesale collapse in Scotland to a party that positioned itself to Labour's left is at odds with the Blair-Mandelson analysis. It is argued that in the eyes of the Scottish electorate Labour was too right-wing, and this was the decisive factor. All agree, however, that instrumental in Labour's defeat was the public perception of economic incompetence, a result of the leadership's failure to rebut the colossal falsehood that the 2007 global financial crisis was caused by Gordon Brown spending money on schools and hospitals.

Both assessments are partially correct insofar as they identify an aspect of the defeat. However, both miss the fact that Labour's loss was actually three-fold. Firstly, Labour lost left-wing voters and all but one seat in Scotland to the SNP. Secondly, Labour lost moderate voters in England and Wales to the Conservatives, losing the marginal seats. And finally, Labour lost working-class voters to UKIP across the country, but particularly

in Labour's so-called heartlands (although UKIP have so far failed to gain any seats from this).

Tristram Hunt, MP for Stoke-on-Trent and one-time television historian, has correctly identified the above – dubbing it Labour's "triple-bind" – and recognised that Labour cannot win an election without winning over all three voting blocs. He is wrong, however, to suggest that a return to New Labour will recapture the lost voters. On the contrary, New Labour's record in government is precisely why left-wing voters have abandoned the party, and the cultural alienation of the general public from the metropolitan-elite leadership is a key factor in working-class voters moving to UKIP. Never mind that UKIP is a quintessentially establishment party – they have successfully portrayed themselves as outsiders and the defenders of those left behind.

This is the true picture of Labour's defeat, and the electoral Everest they have to climb in order to win again: they have to be left-wing enough to appeal to those who have switched to the SNP and the Greens, without scaring off middle-England swing voters who backed the Tories. But it is winning back the third voting bloc, working-class UKIP supporters and non-voters, which represents the greatest challenge to the party. Labour was founded in order to represent working-class people: if they are usurped in that function – even 'illegitimately' by a right-wing party – then the crisis Labour faces is truly existential, of a scale never before seen in the party's history. So how is it to be done?

The only way Labour can hope to reunite these three blocs of voters is to renounce its status as a calculating electoral machine, and genuinely rebuild as a movement representative of the cultures and regions of the UK. They have to find purpose in a thousand local campaigns to win back the trust lost so thoroughly in the New Labour years. They have to think big and, for the first time since the 1970s, offer a grand vision capable of unifying apparently disparate groups, underpinned by the belief that nobody, anywhere, can be written off as the collateral damage of globalisation. Whether political obsessives called this socialism or social democracy, Red Labour or Blue Labour, would matter less than the fact that it involved those who do not think in such terms.

Jon Cruddas, the party's resident intellectual, is one of the few in the Labour high command to really understand the extent to which they have to change in order to survive. Tom Watson, running for the deputy leadership, is another. But on the evidence thus far, the frontrunners for the leadership – Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, and Liz Kendall – largely represent a step back to the obsolete Blair-Brown years. Imagining a grander form of Labour politics might be easier said than done – but if in 2020 the new leader attempts one more heave of the New Labour strategy, the 2015 result will pale in comparison.

## UKIP, from a single issue party to the radical right: real symptom, wrong diagnosis



Aurelien Mondon

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UKIP received significant media attention, both as a contender and as an issue, in the 2014 EU elections and 2015 General election. While the party caused an 'earthquake' a year ago when it won the European contest, its results in the General election have proven harder to gauge either positively or negatively. UKIP only managed to send one candidate to Westminster (Douglas Carswell, a defector from the Conservative party), not only losing the second seat it had acquired after another Tory defection, but also with Nigel Farage himself failing to win South Thanet. On paper, it seems that the 'purple revolution' has petered out. However, it would be a mistake to reduce UKIP's electoral performance to the number of seats it will occupy in parliament. On the whole, the party performed well when considering it polled second in 125 seats across England and Wales (Steafel et al. 11 May 2015). Contradictory accounts of UKIP's performance are further nuanced when abstention is taken into account. With 33.9% abstention, UKIP's overall share of the registered vote falls to 8.3% – a figure which is even lower when non-registered voters are taken into account. This suggests therefore that while the performance of UKIP should not be downplayed, it is not the alternative it has been painted to be in much of the media, as the party has failed to appeal to more than one out of ten British voters despite very favourable circumstances (Mondon 2015).

### From a single party issue to the radical right

Yet it is clear that the former single-issue party has become an important player in British parliamentary politics, if not for its presence in Westminster, then in

the media. It is argued here that part of its success has come from its transition from a narrow Eurosceptic platform to a radical right strategy. While this move has certainly limited the appeal of the party to certain parts of the electorate, it has strengthened its status as an outsider and an alternative, through its constant and disproportionate mediatisation.

Defining the radical right is a task in itself, and one which cannot be done justice in this short article. For clarity and brevity, I will focus on the three aspects I believe to be core to contemporary radical right parties: nativism, neo-racism and right-wing populism. However, many examples suggest that UKIP has moved towards other traditional core concepts of the radical right such as a strong symbolic leadership and authoritarianism (Mudde 2007; Mondon 2013).

### Nativism and neo-racism

Nativism can be described as 'the desire to return to, or restore, indigenous practices, beliefs, and cultural forms inhibited, destroyed, or outlawed by a colonizing power' (Buchanan 2010). As Nicholas Startin (2015: 313) has noted, 'the British Eurosceptic tradition is very much linked to the past and to a nostalgic attachment to a perceived, bygone era of a better Britain [...] deeply couched in notions of sovereignty and identity'. However, Farage's UKIP has pushed this nationalist feeling based on a seemingly glorious past and independence to another level, adding the fear of an 'Other' in the form of Brussels as the elitist enemy and/or the immigrant as the coloniser. While its 2015 manifesto clearly shies away from traditional radical right discourse, the party's media strategy during the 2014 and 2015 campaigns made it clear that UKIP's issue with immigration is not just 'about space' (UKIP 2015: 11). In fact, numerous incidents during 2014 and 2015 have highlighted that UKIP's discourse often verges on neo-racism, and at times even traditional racism. Farage himself has often been on the frontline, rendering UKIP's assertions about rogue candidates unconvincing. During UKIP's 2014 spring conference, Farage (in Sparrow 28 February 2014) declared that 'in scores of our cities and market towns, this country in a short space of time has frankly become unrecognisable' and that 'this is not the kind of community we want to leave to our children and grandchildren', demonstrating clearly the threat posed by an outsider to a reified national identity. Four days before the European elections, having already declared on LBC (LBC 16 May 2014) that he would be 'concerned' were a 'group of Romanian men' to move next door, Farage stressed further that 'any normal and fair-minded person would have a perfect right to be concerned' in such circumstances (UKIP 18 May 2014). This essentialisation of a whole population on the basis of nationality or culture was a clear utterance of neo-racism:

a racism which has as its dominant theme not biological heredity, but the irreducibility of cultural differences; a racism which, at first sight, does not imply the superiority of certain groups or peoples over others, but "only" the noxiousness of the removal of borders,

the incompatibility of ways of life and traditions (Balibar 1997: 33)

This added to a series of other 'gaffes' culminating in the racist outbursts of Godfrey Bloom (Mason 7 August 2013), Kerry Smith (Mason 14 December 2014) and Rozanne Duncan (Hull 2015) amongst others, as well as the departure of prominent supporters over UKIP's lurch to the extreme right (Thandi 13 May 2014), something which Alan Sked (Sked 26 May 2014) also deplored after he left the party he founded in 1993. Borrowing further from other European radical right parties, UKIP has also surfed the wave of Islamophobia, most notably when Farage attempted to capitalise on the tragic Charlie Hebdo events in France, declaring that 'we have got no-go zones across most of the big French cities' – the 'we' being of particular note here.

### A populist party

Whatever your definition of the concept, whether it is seen as a style, a discourse or a thin ideology, UKIP's recent campaigns are clearly populist. In Nigel Farage's pledge on the front page of the party's 2015 manifesto (UKIP 2015: 1), the phrase 'real people' is emphasised in the largest font. These idealised 'real people' are associated with the concepts of 'integrity' and 'honesty', standing in clear opposition to 'a career political class' and to immigration – the first of the 'major issues of the day' (UKIP 2015: 3). Under Farage's leadership in particular, UKIP has taken advantage of the distrust most people have in political parties and the workings of democracy, in the UK as well as Europe. Since 2010, respondents declaring that they 'tend not to trust political parties' have averaged 82%, compared to an average of 13.6% for those who 'tend to trust' them (European Commission 2015). In a 2012 YouGov/University of Oxford survey, Peter Kellner (2012), highlighted that while around two thirds of respondents in the England, Wales and Scotland 'described Britain as a democratic country' and believed that 'Britain's system is one of the best in the world', less than 15% felt that the Westminster parliament does a good job 'representing the interests and wishes of people like you'. Such distrust and disenchantment in the workings of democracy, coupled with the economic uncertainty which came as a result of the Global Financial Crisis, have made contemporary British politics fertile soil for a populist party like UKIP

### UKIP: disease or symptom

Therefore, that UKIP, a now typical radical right party, appeals to the disenchanted and disaffected should not come as a surprise, nor should its relative success within part of the working class. Contrary to some common narratives in the UK, such trends are not new. Part of the voting working class has always been attracted to the radical right, and at best, only two thirds of it ever voted for the left, leaving at least a third for the right (Ipsos Mori 2010). Yet the hype around UKIP as an alternative to mainstream parties is dangerously misleading (Mondon 2015). It presupposes that UKIP is a convincing alternative, while, in fact, as with many of its radical right counterparts in Europe, it has so far failed to break through its glass ceiling despite very



favourable conditions and disproportionate mediatisation key to political success today. While the UK electorate is not immune to the Europe-wide disenchantment with politics, 'only' 8.3% of registered voters turned to UKIP in the General election. While the electoral system may have played a part in forcing some potential UKIP supporters towards parties more likely to have an impact in Westminster, Farage has failed to bring voters out of abstention in droves, demonstrating that UKIP is not the alternative they are waiting for. Furthermore, abstention is largest within the loosely-defined working class (Ipsos Mori 2015)<sup>2</sup>. This is UKIP's so-called target electorate. But the figures (57% turnout for categories D and E and 62% for C2, compared to 66% overall) show a similar trend to that in EU elections (European Parliament November 2012). While UKIP is doing well amongst the working class (18%), its share of the vote in this category when taking abstention into account is in fact just over 10%, meaning that 9 out of 10 members of the working class do not find UKIP an appealing alternative.



Therefore, while the rise of UKIP is concerning, it is only a small part of the picture. If we are to take the issue of democracy seriously, UKIP should only occupy a marginal part in the debate about politics and the ways to reform our current democratic system, if indeed it can be reformed. Instead, closer attention should be paid to the vast majority of the electorate which votes or does not vote, but on the whole agree about their distrust in parties and politics in the narrow sense of the term. However, at present, UKIP, and the radical right in general, have been convenient decoys which have allowed politicians, commentators and academics alike to stray away from more ambitious questions about the very nature of democracy in twenty-first century Europe.

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<sup>2</sup> Categories C2, D and E in the Ipsos Mori poll – note that E also includes 'state pensioners' and 'unemployed with state benefits only' [https://www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1285\\_MediaCT\\_thoughtpiece\\_Social\\_Grade\\_July09\\_V3\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1285_MediaCT_thoughtpiece_Social_Grade_July09_V3_WEB.pdf)

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# Local level campaigning: back to basics for the Liberal Democrats



**Rebecca Tidy**

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The Liberal Democrats received their highest ever share of the vote in the 2010 General Election. Former party leader, Charles Kennedy, had been successful in ensuring that the party adopted a long-term strategy that involved increasing vote share, instead of focussing only upon a limited number of target seats. The party received 23% of the national vote and returned 57 MPs to the House of Commons. Therefore, neither the Liberal Democrats nor the pollsters themselves anticipated that the party would receive its lowest share of the vote since its formation in 1988 during the 2015 General Election. Nationally, the party won just 7.8% of the vote and held only 8 seats.

It is barely a month after the election and party officials are still trying to work out what went wrong. Despite this, the party is keen to regain the ground that has been lost over the last 5 years and has already invited supporters to join the 'Liberal Democrat Fight Back.' This article assesses how the results of the 2015 General Election may impact upon the party's campaign strategy and discusses ways in which they should 'fight back'.

## Local level campaigning

During the 1990s, the party used a combination of local level campaigning and community politics within their electoral strategy. This involved distributing locally focused literature, canvassing and engaging with

residents to develop local policies addressing their concerns. They tried to select candidates with a long-term commitment to both local campaigning and standing for election, so that they could reduce the impact of having limited resources. Studies have shown that the party performed better in wards with candidates that met these criteria (see for instance, Cutts, 2004; Russell and Fieldhouse, 2005; Denver et al., 2003).

Given that the party still has fewer resources than its Conservative and Labour counterparts, selection committees should, once again, seek candidates willing to commit a substantial period of time to local campaigning and standing for election over a period of years. Selection committees should address these questions prior to choosing candidates. Many people, including David Steele, have anticipated that the cause of liberalism has been set back several decades. A selection process based on local campaigning may help overcome this setback.

Running a continuous local campaign is labour intensive, but it has been shown that the more intense a party's local campaign, relative to its opponents', the better its performance (Cutts, 2006). Local campaigning is also a larger predictor of electoral success within the Liberal Democrats, than within the Conservative or Labour parties. Therefore, it is important that the party can mobilise volunteers to run these campaigns. Over three quarters of constituency campaigns benefit from volunteers that are not members (Fisher et al. 2013), so existing volunteers and candidates should ask friends, family and supporters to volunteer. This holds particularly true within Conservative-facing areas, as supporters are more likely to volunteer if the party is fighting a traditional political enemy (Cutts, 2006).

## Using Local Representation as a Building Block to National Representation

Smaller parties, including the Liberal Democrats, are often regarded as 'politically inexperienced' because they have little experience of forming a government and running a country. Arguably, the party's lack of governing experience was highlighted throughout the course of the last parliament. They failed to keep various promises made within their manifesto, such as voting to abolish University tuition fees. Many of the party's MPs argued that they had discovered that it was simply not possible to keep such a promise, thus reflecting the differences between being an opposition party and a party of government.

If the party is to regain voters' trust then it will need to overcome the 'politically inexperienced' label with which it is associated. Cutts (2004) found that Liberal Democrat performance in local government was a significant predictor of success in subsequent general elections. Therefore the party should focus its limited resources upon areas where it already has some degree of local government representation. The party successfully used this strategy during the 1990s and gradually voters were able to assess representatives'

ability to make effective decisions and control budgets (Russell and Fieldhouse, 2005).

Areas with councillors or long-term candidates generally have more volunteers and the ability to engage in a greater level of local campaigning. This means that they can aid the electoral prospects of the parliamentary candidate by delivering literature, canvassing and mobilising supporters (Russell and Fieldhouse, 2005). Cutts (2004) found that during the 1992 and 1997 general elections in Bath, the Liberal Democrats were reliant upon hardworking local volunteers to identify and mobilise supporters to stop the Conservatives taking the seat. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the party should continue its attempts to increase membership and volunteering. This may help them to increase their share of the vote and win additional seats within local elections and ultimately use this as a building block to winning more seats at the next general election.

### Targeting

The Liberal Democrats have never had the same level of resources as the two main parties. Therefore, when Paddy Ashdown led the party he pursued a strategy that involved targeting a small number of winnable seats. However, when Charles Kennedy took the helm in 1999 he realised that the party needed to increase its vote share in non-target seats if it were to ever stand a realistic chance of significantly increasing its parliamentary representation (Cutts, 2004). This meant that the party needed to focus on seats where they were coming third and work hard so that they may one day become 'winnable'. He aimed to win 20% of the vote and 50 seats in the 2001 General Election. Such an approach was required when the party had over 40 MPs and needed to find new seats where they stood a realistic chance of winning. However, now that the party has only 8 MPs it needs to focus its limited resources upon winning in a selected number of areas where the competitor MP has a small majority. These areas include Cambridge, Eastbourne, Thornbury and Yate, Lewes and Twickenham (UKPR, 2015). This means that the party will have a greater chance of being able to provide the resources required to win.

In conclusion, this article discussed a number of campaign techniques that the Liberal Democrats may use within their 'fight back' following the 2015 General Election. Many of these techniques were used successfully by the party in the 1990s when it was newly formed and seeking to develop the building blocks for parliamentary representation. Such techniques include focusing upon local campaigning, particularly within Conservative-facing constituencies where the Liberal Democrats are close competitors; seeking candidates with a long-term commitment to campaigning and seeking election, mobilising volunteers that may not be formal members of the party and targeting areas where the party already has local government representation, so that it can build out from there. Will the party return to a style of campaigning that seems to have been pushed aside in recent years? Only time will tell.

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## Foodbanks and the new welfare settlement in the UK



**Rana Jawad**

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Food Banks have existed for a long time in the UK but the work that they do and the populations they serve have fallen under the radar of mainstream academic and policy debates in British social policy. Some of the key reasons for this are that Food Banks have been mainly run by little known faith-based organisations and government policy in the 2000s has been hesitant to shed the spotlight on them. All this changed under the coalition government with the shocking claims that up to one million people have relied at one point or another on food packages from charities like The Trussell Trust.

The surge in media attention and the reluctant policy debate around Food Banks under the coalition government has highlighted the ever-closer realignment of the British welfare system to a two-tier system of employment-based social security and an officially sanctioned system of social safety nets

populated in large part by charities - i.e the type of welfare system which exists in countries with weak or underdeveloped welfare states. The argument made here is that Food Banks are one of the best kept secrets of British social policy: though they are underpinned by the good will of a vibrant charitable sector; in the current political and economic climate they confirm the new welfare settlement within which poverty alleviation is to take place in the UK. This entry incorporates a desk review of available literature on food banks in the UK as well as published research conducted by the author among social welfare charities and voluntary organisations both in the UK and in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, with particular reference to organisations that have a faith-based or religious character.

### **Emergency food aid or food security?**

Though not a new phenomenon in the UK, emergency food provision in the form of foodbanks has helped to “formalise and standardise this provision and on a national scale” (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). The network of foodbanks led by The Trussell Trust has played a key role in this situation. In other parts of the English-speaking world charitable forms of welfare and social assistance types of programmes are more the norm, such as in the USA and Canada, emergency food aid has a more established history. Equally, readers will be most familiar with emergency food aid to populations affected by civil conflict or environmental crises further afield in regions such as the Middle East or Africa. Here too, the more common configuration for social welfare provision privileges the smaller proportion of formally employed workers (usually able-bodied men or public sector workers) and leaves the larger proportion of vulnerable member of the population or informal workers more dependent on forms of social assistance, including food aid. The evidence of the last decade in the UK show that the UK, though at a different level of welfare development, is moving in the direction of this two tier system.

The use of emergency food aid and recourse to food banks has indeed increased in the UK in the last decade, but the evidence base on the role of food banks, the profile of their users or the reasons why individuals and families use them remains scant (Oxfam et al. 2015). Food banks in the UK provide food aid to people in need based on a system of referral by a health or social care professional, or other front-line agencies (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). Food banks are run by a variety of voluntary and often faith-based organisations who themselves acquire the food donations from consumers, retailers and the food industry. The largest network of food banks in the UK is the franchise run by The Trussell Trust charity (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). The main source of data regarding food bank usage in the UK is The Trussell Trust Network since such data is not officially collected by the government. Food banks are also only one example of a variety of community level food aid projects which have proliferated in the UK in the last decade (Dowler and Caraher, 2003).

A small number of reports discussing general trends were produced by Oxfam/Church Action on Poverty namely *Walking the Breadline* (2013) and *Below the Breadline* (2014) reports. These argued that the rise in food aid in the UK is not associated strictly with the growth of The Trussell Trust Network but that the number of meals provided by three of the main food aid providers (The Trussell Trust, Fareshare and Food Cycle) increased by over 50% between 2012/13 and 2013/14. A desk-review by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) argued that robust empirical evidence on UK food aid provision, and the reasons for its use, remained limited. The Department for Work and Pensions has also recently stated that there is ‘no robust evidence’ linking the effects of welfare reform policies to the rising use of food banks. But it is clearly not possible to separate discussion food bank use in the UK from the context of the current economic context which has become marked by higher food and fuel costs, stagnating or declining real wages and the continued effects of the economic recession.

In sum, food banks are an emergency resource which deals with the symptoms of poverty and not its causes. They are an expression of the good will of voluntary sector organisations who are able to step in during times of crisis to offer direct support to those in need. But the growth and formalisation in British society reflects not only the detrimental impact of economic recession but the tightening of social security laws which are pushing citizens out of the social protection umbrella of the state.

### **Key implications for social policy in the UK**

The issue of foodbanks is deeply linked to broader debates about food security and human rights. Dowler and O'Connor (2012: 46) cite a recent UN rapporteur on food security as arguing that “by focusing on food experiences in the context of human rights, food poverty and food insecurity can be interpreted as symptoms of the failure of a system to ensure adequate income levels and the availability and affordability of healthy food. The dependence on food banks is ‘symptomatic of a broken social protection system and the failure of the State to meet its obligations to its people’”.

These issues are also made clear in a recent joint report by Oxfam, Child Poverty Action Group and The Church of England (2015) on the perspectives of users of food banks in the UK where by evidence clearly suggests that difficulties vulnerable groups experience with the benefits system in the UK increase their dependence on food banks like The Trussell Trust. Factors such as having to wait for benefits, dealing with the impact of sanctions, experiencing delays with disability benefit or tax credits were cited as key reasons for seeking recourse in food banks. These factors occur against a backdrop of difficult living circumstances such as geographical isolation, physical and mental illness, caring responsibilities, difficulty obtaining educational qualifications or skills and financial indebtedness. Hence some of the key policy recommendations made in the Oxfam et al. (2015)



report include: (1) Improving access to short-term benefit advances; (2) Reforming sanctions policy and practice; (3) Improving the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) regime so that help can be maintained when claimants are challenging a decision ; (4) Sustaining and improving access to emergency financial support; (5) Ensuring Jobcentre provides an efficient and more supportive service; (6) Improving access of benefit-users to appropriate advice and support.

Food banks are an emergency measure but a clear sign that state social protection in the UK is increasingly unable or unwilling to address the challenges posed by an uncertain economic climate and a tough welfare reform agenda.

Food banks have a long history in British social policy but their role has become more prominent in the last decade. Though they are underpinned by the good will of a vibrant charitable sector; acknowledging their role formally in the current political and economic climate confirms the new welfare settlement within which poverty alleviation is to take place in the UK.

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So, that's it then, another five years of the 'Greenest Government Ever'. Whilst many public policy sectors may lay claim to being within the purview of Prime Minister David Cameron's famous assertion; the environmental management policy community, nominally tied to the rising and falling fortunes of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), has probably been impacted most by it. Similarly to other Governmental departments, Defra saw significant budgetary cuts of 17% during the last Parliament (Defra 2015), partly because it was not a ring-fenced priority department. And considering more departmental 'efficiency savings' are on the horizon (Defra 2014), Defra is liable to see more cuts this Parliament.

## What hope now for biodiversity offsetting?



**Nick Kirsop-Taylor**

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For one piece of policy, currently stuck in purgatory, this next parliament could be critical to its success or failure. Biodiversity Offsetting is the mechanism through which environmental, or biodiversity degradation, caused by building new developments on landscapes, can be mitigated through purchasing compensatory sites elsewhere (Defra 2013a). Despite being stuck in the long grass since 2014, the original underlying rationale behind Biodiversity Offsetting may still appear to hold true. The narrative of its international champions and of Owen Patterson MP, the former ministerial champion of Biodiversity Offsetting at Defra (Business and Biodiversity Offset Programme, unknown date), is that they offer 'win-win outcomes' for both business and biodiversity in a cost-neutral fashion. For the environmental management community, biodiversity offsets will lead to greater opportunities and funding to create biodiversity-rich habitats, as well as connect up existing sites through the 'net gains' of



ecologically coherent, landscape scale, conservation corridors or stepping stones. For the development community, it offers certainty and risk reduction around conservation barriers in the planning system, which should help 'cut-red-tape' and catalyse greater private sector investment. Indeed under Biodiversity Offsetting everyone wins, no-one loses, and best of all, it is all achieved without cost to the UK tax-payer, which, on face-value sounds like a paradigmatic governance instrument that we should be enthusiastically pursuing.

However, at the conclusion of the last Parliament, Defra and the Commons Select Committee did not ascribe Biodiversity Offsetting as either a success or a failure. They ostensibly awaited the final verdict on the 2013 public consultation and the 2012-2014 trials before deciding the future of the policy, and they planned to publish recommendations at some point in the indeterminate, post-election future. Underlying this were some significant undercurrents, and understanding these in the new parliamentary reality may help elucidate how likely we are to see Biodiversity Offsetting given firmer footing in this next parliament.

Significantly, and contrary to what some may think, the option for developers and local authorities to voluntarily use Biodiversity Offsetting is here already (section 118 of National Planning Policy Framework, 2012, DCLG 2012). The problem however, is that nobody really knows what final form this should, and will, take in the UK. Defra submitted their proposals for how it should look in a 2013 Green Paper (Defra 2013a), which was followed by a public consultation (Defra 2013b). This was a somewhat back-to-front arrangement that was suggestive of a top-down policy making process. It is fair to say that the responses to the public consultation from a wide range of stakeholders wasn't a narrative of support. Whilst many in the policy community were broadly supportive of the business and conservation communities working more closely (RSPC 2013), there was a plethora of objections about the Green paper. Not least amongst these were concerns that if the policy remained voluntary, then there would be the potential for it to be an easy additional avenue for developers to have multiple attempts at the planning process (ibid.). It could also be used as a mechanism through which biodiversity rich sites are developed whilst paying lip-service to biodiversity best-practice; or used to develop sites that currently enjoy special levels of protection, such as ancient woodlands<sup>8</sup>. At the heart of the UK Biodiversity Offsetting narrative lies the contradiction, situated in international best-practice<sup>4</sup>, that to be successful at realising the conservation goals, offsetting schemes need to have strong, and not necessarily low-cost governance (Treweek and Ten Kate 2014, McKenney and Kiesecker 2010, Tregidga 2013).

Indeed, perhaps the most vociferous champion of highlighting this contradiction was the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) (EAC 2013), who comprehensively criticised the Green paper for being too simplistic, and needing significant reworking.

Perhaps the most likely outcome for this policy is that during the next Parliament Defra will re-work the Green paper to include many of the peripheral comments and concerns of the EAC, inclusive of the response to stakeholder consultation but, crucially, will omit changing it from voluntary to statutory – for all intents and purposes the most important element. This is because despite the international growth in balanced Biodiversity Offsetting schemes, in the UK proposal it is an inherently pro-business policy instrument, which offers less for conservation. Perhaps if all the recommendations of the EAC and policy community were addressed, the proposed scheme would no longer be unbalanced in favour of business and would actually function as-per balanced international best practice (Dowd, Barcellos, Harris, Jones, Pilla, Mulder 2012). However, a more balanced, statutory approach may run a reputational risk to the Government, of the perception that it is adding additional costs onto businesses, to the detriment of investment decisions. In a competition of narratives between 'cutting red tape for business' versus 'the Greenest Government ever', the pro-conservation argument is liable to lose, though it probably won't be portrayed as such. Instead, the consequence will probably be that the policy remains symbolically implemented in planning guidance (Business and Biodiversity Offset Programme, unknown date). Due to its ecologically comprehensive, yet voluntary nature, it would rarely be used except in the direst of situations for developers, and even then only as a tool to re-attempt failed planning applications. Moreover, where it isn't statutory, it will fail to catalyse the critical mass of interest to create a UK habitat banking market, constitute a clear opportunity for conservation organisations to act strategically toward it, or create any tangible ecologically coherent biodiversity gains. In short, this coming parliament will most likely see Biodiversity Offsets 'buried' in planning guidance to be rarely dug up, except in cases of development opportunism, or in support of local development goals, but never in a coherent, UK-wide strategic, pro-Biodiversity conservation format.

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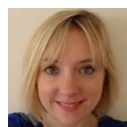
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In the 1997 General Election, the Labour party won a landslide victory on the basis of an election campaign in which education sat centre stage. The General Election in 2015, however, could not have been more different, not only in terms of its outcome but also in relation to the topics that received the most attention. For in the run up to the election, education was repeatedly relegated, by both major political parties, behind seemingly more pressing and controversial issues such as the nature and management of our economy, Britain's membership of the EU, the future of the United Kingdom and the problems facing our National Health Service. Within some parts of the education community – in particular those working in the school system – being out of the political spotlight may well have been accompanied by a sense of relief. For over the last five years, state schools in England have undergone one of the most significant periods of change since Thatcher's Education Reform Act in 1988. The coalition government's Academies and Free Schools programme has fundamentally altered local education landscapes, GCSE and A Level curriculum reform has been pushed through in punishingly short timescales, and a raft of changes have been implemented - and further changes are still forthcoming - to the system of public accountability for schools.

This upheaval has unsurprisingly created a sense of policy fatigue amongst many parts of the teaching workforce, with some prominent members of the education community calling for an independent body to set the direction and pace of change for education policy in future (see BBC, 2015). Any hopes that the school system would remain outside of the political spotlight for any length of time have, however, been recently disappointed. For less than a month into the new parliament, the newly elected government has announced its plans to speed up the pace of structural reform: 'failing and coasting' schools are to face more rapid interventions; greater powers are to be given to Regional School Commissioners to turn schools into Academies; and a commitment has been made to open 500 new Free Schools over the next five years (see DfE, 2015; Cabinet office, 2015). For the majority of the public these changes may have little noticeable impact on the day-to-day education being provided to their children, at least in the short term. However, to those working within the school system, they represent another step along the journey towards an increasingly corporate and market-oriented approach to the delivery of education.

## The neo-liberal revolution in education continues apace



**Anna Edwards**

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This journey has not been short-lived, for the central pillars of the present school 'quasi-market' were first forged by the previous Conservative government in the late 1980s (Glennister, 1991). The aim then, as it remains today, was to break up monopolistic local authority provision and replace it with a competitive, market-based system of state-funded, autonomous schools (ibid.). The Education Reform Act in 1988 was the starting point for this political project, giving parents the right to express a preference for a school of their choice (prior to this the accepted norm was that children would attend their local school). This was combined with reforms that required local authorities to delegate budgets to schools via a formula largely based upon the numbers of pupils on their roll. Schools were also given the ability to opt out of local authority control by applying for Grant-Maintained Status, enabling them to receive their funding directly from central government. Later, Ofsted inspection reports and key performance indicators were made publicly available to enable parents to compare the performance of different schools in their area to inform their choice. The theory was that schools would become autonomous, self-governing institutions competing over their performance in order to attract pupils and funding, and that this would lead to more innovative practice, a rise in standards, and a system that is more responsive to parental demand.

Thatcher's reform programme did not however achieve all of its original aims. In particular it did not reduce the role of the local authority within the school system to the extent that was anticipated, with the vast majority of schools reluctant to opt out of their control (Whitty, 1997). Current Conservative policy is therefore designed to complete this unfulfilled goal by encouraging, or indeed forcing, as many schools as possible to convert to Academy status (essentially Grant-Maintained status under a new name). The Free Schools programme - a new addition to the school 'quasi-market' - is designed to strengthen the principle of parental choice and increase diversity within the school system by enabling a range of third parties to set up new schools, including parent groups who are dissatisfied with current provision in the area. In areas where surplus school places already exist, they also have the potential to intensify the competition between schools for pupil numbers.

Meanwhile, the academic debate over the impact of choice and competition within the school system rages on, with a vast body of research literature unable to reach any consensus in favour or against the use of market mechanisms. One of the many problems with the search for a definitive answer to this question is that, as with a market-based approach to the delivery of education, it rests upon the assumption that we can accurately measure and compare school performance and educational standards. This raises all manner of questions such as: What does a high quality education look like? Who gets to decide? And can this be reliably measured? At a political level, there is rarely any serious engagement with these deeper philosophical questions

about education and, perhaps as a direct result there has been very little opposition to the current direction of travel, with the previous Labour government having been equally complicit in the continuation of Thatcher's market-oriented approach. The inability of the opposition to articulate any alternative vision for education may be one of the many reasons for the subject's relegation within the General Election debates in 2015. As a consequence, and for the foreseeable future, the neo-liberal revolution in education looks likely to continue apace.

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# Conservative contradictions and coercive control



**Donna Clutterbuck**

*Donna Clutterbuck is a Social Policy PhD student and part of the Centre for Gender Violence at the University of Bristol. Her PhD focuses on violence in young adults' relationships, looking specifically at coercive control. Donna's principle research area is gender violence, but she has a broad range of research interests surrounding the concepts of gender and sexuality.*



More than one in four women in England and Wales have suffered some form of domestic violence (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2014: 1); this is compared to 16% of men in England and Wales (ONS, 2014: 1). Women are also more likely to have suffered all forms of domestic violence than men (ONS, 2014: 1). In March 2013, under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, the Home Office amended the definition of domestic violence to 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality' (Home Office, 2013). The inclusion of young people and coercive control are new additions to this definition, which marks a step forward. However, the new definition is not at all gendered, despite the gender disparity in official statistics, which, in some ways, negates the step forward made by the wider definition.

More recently, the Serious Crime Bill has been amended to include domestic violence and to criminalise coercive control (House of Commons, 2015). Controlling violence is 'a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour' (House of Commons, 2015: 6). While coercion is 'an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim' (House of Commons, 2015: 6). Stark (2007), who has written extensively about coercive control, explains that when both coercion and control are exercised, an abuser gains complete power over their victim. Coercive control 'is gendered' (Stark, 2007: 5) and men are usually the perpetrators of coercive control (Johnson, 1995: 284; Johnson, 2006: 1003; Kelly and Johnson, 2008: 482). It is inequality between women and men that makes coercive control gendered and female powerlessness, as a result of this inequality, helps to sustain coercive control (Stark, 2007). But, again, this is not highlighted in definitions or legislation. However, the A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls Action Plan (Home Office, 2014a) does highlight that violence is gendered. This shows that the Coalition Government's messages were often contradictory.

With the Conservatives winning the 2015 United Kingdom general election and forming a majority government, these contradictions look set to continue. The Conservative Manifesto states 'we want to see full, genuine gender equality' (Conservatives, 2015: 19) and 'we will prioritise tackling violence against women and girls' (Conservatives, 2015: 59), but if more than one in four women have suffered some form of domestic violence, which is disproportionate to the number of men, does it not seem obvious that domestic violence is a gendered problem? The Home Office definition of domestic violence should reflect the gendered nature of this form of violence to show that domestic violence is a prominent form of violence against women and girls.

Then there is the issue of the cuts. The Conservatives have promised to continue in their reduction of public spending, suggesting that they will make £10 billion worth of savings over the next few years (Conservatives, 2015). If the last five years are anything to go by, this will have dire consequences for women who have suffered domestic violence. Under the coalition Government, the Home Office did set aside £28 million for 'specialist domestic and sexual violence services' (House of Commons, 2015: 9). However, due to the reduction in government spending, cuts to local government budgets has meant women's refuges, which specialise in accommodation and care for women and children who have been victims of domestic violence, have experienced 'devastating budget cuts' (Women's Aid, 2014a). This has meant that 1 in 3 women are being sent away from refuges as refuges just do not have the resources to accommodate for the number of women who need their services (Women's Aid, 2014b). Deeper cuts in this parliament could well mean that even more women and children will be turned away and, quite possibly, it could be the end of these vital services altogether. Although the national Government claims that refuges are local governments' concern, a government that does not protect vital services for domestic violence victims and survivors is not a government that prioritises tackling violence against women and girls or gender equality.

There have also been cuts to legal aid which are not likely to be repealed over the next five years. Legal aid is public funding that can be used to 'help meet the costs of legal advice, family mediation and representation in a court or tribunal', if an individual does not have the funds available to them (UK Government, 2015). Victims and survivors of domestic violence can now only obtain legal aid if they can provide evidence of this violence (UK Government, 2015). This creates more contradictions. Many behaviours which constitute coercive control are often hidden or difficult to prove. The Government itself recognises that coercive control 'may appear innocent, but the cumulative impact on the victim's every-day life will be significant, causing the victim to feel fear, alarm or distress' (Home Office, 2014b: 11). It makes absolutely no sense at all to criminalise coercive control, while blocking avenues to the only source of legal funding that many women who experience this violence depend on in order to successfully prosecute their abuser.

Stark (2007) asserts that gender equality is the only way to combat coercive control. With the Conservative Government set to continue with the Coalition Government's contradictory messages surrounding gender and domestic violence, whilst leaving vital services and resources for domestic violence sufferers unprotected, the likelihood of making moves towards eradicating coercive control and gender inequality over the next five years does not look promising.

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# The Euro: past, present and future



**Bruce Morley**

*Bruce Morley joined the University of Bath's Economics Department in 2006, having previously been an Economics lecturer at the University of Wales Aberystwyth for about ten years. His PhD, Masters and degree were from the Department of Economics at Loughborough University. Bruce's main research interests are in international macroeconomics, particularly models of exchange rate determination. In addition, He is also interested in the economics of the EU, especially the effects of monetary union. He also has an interest in the macroeconomic aspects of the environment and Sport Economics, in particular relating to Cricket.*

One of the most important current political issues is the performance of the European single currency (Euro). Although the UK is not a member, decisions taken in the Eurozone will have wide ranging effects on the UK economy and currency over the next five years. Depending on how the Euro fares, it potentially could affect the UK to a greater extent than the economic policies of the UK political parties, including how fast the budget deficit is reduced and future levels of economic growth. For this reason it is important to assess the causes of the Euro's current problems and what may happen over the next five years.

The European single currency was set up in 1999, with notes and coins being distributed in 2002. Before the Euro was created, all potential members were required to join the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM). This was a pegged exchange rate regime, where exchange rates were allowed to vary by small amounts (2.25%) around a par value. The ERM in effect collapsed in 1993, after the UK and Italy were forced to leave in 1992, following a series of speculative attacks on individual currencies. After 1993, the ERM remained but with much wider bands of plus or minus 15%.

In order to join the single currency all potential members first needed to pass the Maastricht criteria. There were 5 criteria in all, relating to interest rates, inflation, government debt and deficits as well as the need for ERM membership for at least two years prior to joining the Euro. These were meant to ensure convergence across the member state's economies to encourage stability across the Eurozone. All those who

applied to join passed these criteria, except Greece, who were allowed to join in 2001.

The criteria which most affect the current and future viability of the Eurozone are the budget deficit and stock of sovereign debt built up over previous years. The Maastricht criteria required that a country's budget deficit should not exceed 3% of GDP per annum and the outstanding debt should not exceed 60% of GDP per annum. Most of the members struggled to meet this latter requirement, with both Belgium and Italy having approximately 120% of total government debt relative to its annual GDP.

A requirement for continued membership of the Euro, was that all member states keep their budget deficits within 3% of annual GDP. Most of the members including Germany have at some time failed to comply with this, particularly after the financial crisis in 2008. Some have argued that this requirement is lacking in flexibility and should vary across the business cycle. In addition any member who failed to meet this rule in theory would be fined, however as the fine would come from public funds, this would have meant failing the criteria by even more, so no members have ever been fined.

Until recently the Euro had done well against the dollar, but there has been a sharp decline in its value against the dollar in recent months. There is evidence that as the probability of the Euro collapse increases, so the Euro falls in value and the financial and political problems encountered by Greece recently have increased the likelihood of a member state leaving. So far Greece, Ireland and Portugal have required bailout funds and the European Central Bank has intervened in the sovereign debt markets. Greece earlier on suffered a partial default on its debts (roughly 50% of bank held debts) and currently Greece is seeking to renegotiate its debt obligations.

Short-term solutions to the economic problems of the Eurozone involve continued intervention in the bond markets and quantitative easing, which itself includes buying sovereign bonds which supports their price and reduces their return. However a long-term solution will require more fundamental change to the Eurozone and could include a fiscal union among the member states. A fiscal union would involve central control over government spending and possibly taxation, which would enable a far greater level of control to be maintained over individual member state's spending. The main disadvantage of a fiscal union is that it limits flexibility and the ability of individual countries to control their own economies to the benefit of their citizens. Monetary union has involved the loss of monetary policy to control member's economies as well as the option of devaluing the exchange rate. The only policy tool they have left is fiscal policy, but fiscal and monetary policy tend to be closely interlinked, so it is difficult to control one without control of the other.

If closer economic union is not acceptable to the members of the Eurozone, the other possibility is to

break up the Euro and for one or more members to return to their domestic currencies. But there are potential problems with this option, including legal problems. For instance, what currency would the departing country's debt be denominated in? More potential defaults on debt following a country leaving the Euro, could affect the whole EU banking system, as they hold some of the sovereign debt. This could potentially create a financial crisis, as the Banks could have to write off the value of much of this debt against their capital, creating the possibility of bank collapses

The UK exchange rate has also fallen against the dollar in recent months, following the falls in the Euro. The UK economy and exchange rate appears to be falling in sympathy with the Euro, reflecting the economic and financial links between the UK and Eurozone. However the fall in the value of the UK currency could be an advantage, as this could benefit UK exports and therefore GDP. So the immediate consequences of the Euro's problems could benefit the UK in the coming months and years, but if the Euro and the Eurozone continue to suffer from economic and political difficulties, leading to the collapse of the Euro, it would have severe implications for the UK economy.

Predictions about the performance of the Euro over the coming years vary, but many are suggesting it is not tenable in its current form, Alan Greenspan, the former head of the Federal Reserve in the USA recently suggested in a BBC interview that: "The problem is that there is no way that I can conceive of the Euro continuing, unless and until all of the members of the Eurozone become politically integrated - actually even just fiscally integrated won't do it." (BBC, 2015).

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## Leaning towards the East: the development of Sino-British relations in Cameron's second term



**Biao Zhang**

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*Relations from the University of Warwick (2010) and a Doctor of Philosophy in Politics from the University of Exeter (2014). His PhD thesis examines the various conceptions of rationality by Anglophone IR theorists from a historical perspective. He is interested in IR Theory, Philosophy of History and Social Sciences, and British Foreign Policy.*

During David Cameron's first term, Britain lost China but soon won her back. The beginning was gauche. In 2010 Cameron visited China but was rebuffed because he raised human rights issues. In 2011 the potential Anglo-American intervention into the Syrian Civil War made the Chinese government uneasy. In 2012 Cameron's meeting with Dalai Lama enraged Beijing despite the latter's constant warning. A turning point, nevertheless, occurred in 2013. Cameron tried to woo China by sending another delegation. In return, the Premier Li Keqiang visited London to sort out trading arrangements, holding a controversial meeting with the Queen. In 2014 Cameron tackled the protest in Hong Kong with due consideration of Beijing's feelings. In 2015 UK support of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) against American advice pleased Beijing.

With the re-election of Cameron as the Prime Minister, the Sino-British relations will at least continue on the present track. None of the thorny issues for Cameron looming in the future will involve China. The issues of NHS, taxation and Scottish independence are too domestic to entail China. The referendum on EU, the radicalization of British Muslims, the Ukraine crisis and the insecurity felt about Russian military force does not entail China either. The only impediment that may freeze the Sino-British relations – the Hong Kong protestors and general human rights issues – is unlikely to emerge since Cameron has spent three years learning how to cope with Beijing. The Prime Minister is now very clear that a realistic, business-like, conduct towards China suits the latter best.

But it seems that in his second term Cameron will not merely keep Sino-British relations where they are but rather take it to a new stage. Cameron will strengthen his relationship with China for two reasons. First, Cameron demonstrated his determination in the case of AIIB to pursue Britain's own interest. His decision to let

the Exchequer's will prevail over Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond's advice gestured a crystal-clear signal: Cameron did not want American security concerns to override the British economic interest. The decision was applauded by Beijing. The Chinese government had reiterated its dislike of the politicization of economic cooperation, and Cameron's decision liquidated the suspicion. Whether Cameron's decision is a political commitment to Beijing is extremely hard to say. Some Chinese statesmen and scholars read it as a signal of embracing Beijing and abandoning Washington. But it is clear that as long as there are complementary interest between China and Britain in exchanging investment for high-tech medical and environmental goods and management experiences, and as long as the Prime Minister cares more about this than he does about the American reaction, the Sino-British cooperation will continue to develop without any hindrance.

Second, and paradoxically, Cameron will endeavor to remedy the Anglo-American relation while at the same time improving the British relation with China. The Financial Times suggested on May 1st that the "White House no longer sees anything special in UK relations". The White House may cease to see Britain as special but Britain cannot afford to do the same to the US: Britain needs American involvement in Europe (in the current situation with Russia) and cooperation in the Middle East (the Syrian war). Hence in his second term, Cameron will have to sooner or later remedy Anglo-American relations. But the paradox is this: once Cameron placates Washington's skepticism and anger, he must at the same time show to Beijing that London remains faithful and will not follow Washington's lead so closely. But how can Cameron demonstrate his commitment to Beijing? Only by more extensive cooperation.

In his second term Cameron will lean towards China. Leaning towards China is not a change of strategic partner. It is impossible to envision Britain embracing China in the Sino-American struggle for world leadership. But it is now clear that Cameron is moving closer to Beijing. The prospect of Sino-British cooperation in commercial and social realms will be very bright.



# SWDTC Student Summer Event

**Monday 29 June 2015, University of Exeter**

- 14:30-16:00     University of Exeter Campus **Sculpture Trail**
- 16:00-17:30     **'Food Matters' Talk, Tasters & Discussion**
- 17:30-20:00     **BBQ & drinks**

**RSVP** to [swdtc.studentreps@gmail.com](mailto:swdtc.studentreps@gmail.com) **by Monday 22 June**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**BATH**



University of  
**BRISTOL**

UNIVERSITY OF  
**EXETER**



**14:15**

Meet outside Library, Stocker Road (#1 on the campus map)

**14:30-16:00**

### **Sculpture Trail**

Tour of the 36 sculptures around the campus, led by the student reps. The trail includes sculptures by world-renowned artists including Dame Barbara Hepworth and Peter Randall-Page.

**16:00-17:30**

### **'Food Matters' Talk, Tasters & Discussion**

XFi Building (#30 on the campus map)

Exeter students will give an interactive talk on food and local produce (interactive as this will involve eating things!), talking to both materiality and viscosity in research.

**17:30-20:00**

### **BBQ & drinks**

XFi Building (#30 on the campus map)

Round off the day with some much-deserved food and drink!